

TRINITARIAN MISSIONAL MATRIX: FORMING A COMMUNITY OF  
INTEGRATED FAITH, LEARNING, AND MISSION

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To Magda - My Wife and Partner

Thank you for encouraging me in this endeavor

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis examined Relational Trinitarian Theology and the resulting implications for anthropology as a theological matrix for creating an undergraduate senior year capstone course. Relational Trinitarian theology provides a community of students an integrated vision for life and living in the context of the *missio Dei*. This in turn provides a matrix for the exploration of holistic missional living in community that addresses vocation as witness and work in anticipation of the Kingdom of God.

The next section of this research focused on examining Christian higher education in the United States and the influence of modernism with its dualistic divisions between faith and vocation. An alternative model for higher education asserts that faith provides a strategic role in defining vocation as missional life lived out in the kingdom of God. The outcome of this research was the development of a curriculum utilizing a “Backward Design” model that starts with desired outcomes and then works backwards to design learning activities that will shape those outcomes. This planning model encourages teachers to design learning activities that synergistically complement each other, build critical thinking skills, and implement responses and helpful habits that will serve the student throughout their adult life. The outcomes focused on relationship with God, relationship in community, and relationship with the world.

## INTRODUCTION

There are two motivating reasons for my pursuit in researching this topic. The first is that mission is not the call for the few but the passion and heart beat of Christ's church. It is about God's love and passion for the world that calls all people who take their faith in Christ seriously to live as missional people, to love as God loves. If the church shares in the mission of God to reach the entire world, then all believers in the community of faith are called to a missional life. The second reason is that missional living must be founded on the theology of a Trinitarian God who is at work in the world. This theology of Trinity both invites and transforms the person and the community of faith because all of our life is ultimately about God's life, love, and glory.

At the heart of a passionate, loving, and missional church is a great theology. Not just any theology that rises up from the human need to hope and worship, but a theology that is revealed to us by the creator who made us. The theology of the church is founded on the incarnate Son of God who reveals the Trinitarian communion. Our theology is revelation from a loving God who invades history and pursues humanity by sending the Son. In Christ, the fullness and glory of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit is revealed. It is in the story of God that we find our story, our meaning, and learn a new way of living. In knowing the Trinity through the work of the Son, we gain the hope of eternal life with God. The disciple's life is shaped by a liberating faith to become the creation that the Father always intended. It is faith in the Son and his death, burial, and resurrection that brings us into communion with the Trinity, our brothers and sisters, and with creation. Through trust in God we become caught up in something beyond ourselves. In truly knowing God we are called into the love and passion of his work that

began when God first spoke all created things into being and will continue until the second coming of Christ. Through that image of God and the world, we are given wings to imagine a transformed self, a transformed community, and even a transformed world. To discover a relational Creator whose very essence is community and love, gives us the story of who we are as persons and relational beings together. It provides a social imagery that motivates us with the love and passion for the world that comes from the Father and is made possible by Christ and the Spirit. Those who know and walk with Jesus know the love and passion of the Father for the world and learn the direction and ways of the Spirit. A sound Trinitarian Theology that teaches and incarnates the communion of God into the communion of the church produces loving and passionate missional people! A Trinitarian theology that provides a social imagination and transformative life practices is essential for inviting young adults into a lifelong journey of seeking God and becoming. There is no other competing narrative for our lives that is Good News. There is no other grand narrative that is big enough or beautiful enough that can create in us the fullness of joy and passion for life and love. There is nothing else that assures our hope in our future. All other stories lead to despair or acceptance of what is. Only with the story of God revealed in Jesus Christ is there promise and seal guaranteeing our future and what will be.

A short time ago, I was visiting one of the churches I helped plant in a slum of Guatemala City. I was talking with a young woman that I have known since her childhood. She started out as an incredibly vivacious and bright child with a deep faith, but somewhere life had defeated her; she had compromised her beliefs and values in the process of several relationships. Even though she occasionally still attends church, the

story of her life is a narrative of defeat and loss of self worth. The competing story of the slum where she lives was much more effective in making her believe that story over the story of the work of God in the world and her incredible worth.

I see the same thing happening in the lives of the college students I teach in Nashville, Tennessee. They hear a chorus of competing stories about what they should love and pursue. These stories tell them what they must desire, and speak lies about their reason for being. The stories of the world tell them that they are not good enough, or to be complete they need this new thing or a better physique. These stories make them disciples of false prophets and consumers of material things. These stories speak of life with Christ as a path among many equal paths to find God, and that any path we decide upon will be fine because it is, after all, about us. Many Christians in the West serve two gods – Christ and career or Christ and.... Many Christians have observed that our children are leaving the church. I believe that a Trinitarian theology in teaching and practice is more than able to compete in our pluralistic secular world and captivate the hearts of our young men and women. When all believers take up the cause of the missio Dei, then the entire world will hear the story of God and worship! For the moment, my calling to the missional life includes teaching students in a Christian University about the story of God and inviting them to accompany me on this adventure of knowing God and living in community with Him.



## **CHAPTER 1**

### **CHRISTIAN HIGHER EDUCATION AS DISCIPLESHIP**

The uniqueness of the Christian university in contrast to secular universities is in the unapologetic advocacy for Christian spiritual formation that goes beyond preparing students for a professional vocation. This advocacy for Christian spiritual formation provides guiding wisdom that shapes the lifelong use of knowledge and the exercise of skills. However, in the twilight of the Modern paradigm and in the emergent light of the postmodern (pluralistic) worldview, both the Church and the Christian university face new challenges in the influencing of young adults through andragogy and praxis to fully embrace an integrated life as disciples of Christ. Promoting a distinctive Christian worldview<sup>1</sup> is not enough in an age where multiple and competing worldviews clamor for attention. Educators of university students shape worldview, influence moral values and contribute to lifelong habits through the narrative of the perception of the world they provide in the dissemination of knowledge and the example of personal and communal life styles that is university life. The lives of particular students and the communities they form are always shaped by the story in which they live. Most Christian universities understand that there is a deeper priority in the vocation of educating students that includes creating a community environment where students are discipled into the grand narrative of the story of God and the continuing story of creation – the *missio Dei*. The

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<sup>1</sup> The definition of a Christian worldview that will be further developed in this paper is a Trinitarian view of creation, the fall, the incarnation of Christ, and the final consummation that is revealed in Scripture.

goal of Christian higher education is the formation of young adults who understand that vocation is the Spirit's gifting for passionate participation in the kingdom of God.<sup>2</sup>

The word discipleship is as relevant today and should be as much a core goal in the halls of Christian education as it was with Jesus on the dusty roads of Palestine. Discipleship invokes the teaching of good theology where content and applied practice does matter. The central theme of this thesis argues for a decidedly Trinitarian theological education that provides the essential all encompassing *metanarrative*<sup>3</sup> to guide young adults living in a complex (not to mention confusing) pluralistic world. The imparting of intellectual knowledge alone is not sufficient unless it embodies what is taught in a community where it is lived.

Scholarship motivated by love provides a unique window into the workings of the world. Paul the apostle makes the astute observation in 1 Corinthians 8:1-3 that knowledge might free us and give us the ability to see things as they really are, but there

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<sup>2</sup> David Dockery, president of Union University, calls for "serious Christian thinking" from Christian scholarship suggesting six overarching characteristics – two of which call for; "Christian thinking that lives in tension, by reflecting an outlook (worldview) while simultaneously having a discipline-specific focus ..." and "Christian thinking that grows out of a commitment to 'sphere-sovereignty', whether in the arts, science, humanities, education, business, health care, or social areas." David S. Dockery, *Shaping a Christian Worldview: The Foundation of Christian Higher Education* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2002), 14. The highly respected Christian Educator Charles H. Malik termed this a crisis for higher education and calls for ordering "... the mind on sound Christian principles at the very heart of where it is formed and informed – namely, in the universities- is one of the two greatest themes that can be considered." Charles H. Malik, "The Two Tasks," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 23 (December 1980): 294, 289-296. Arthur F. Holmes sees this as "getting our theological bearings." Arthur F. Holmes, *The Idea of a Christian College*, Revised Edition (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987), 101-102. Wolterstorff calls it "educating for shalom". Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Educating for Shalom: Essays on Christian Higher Education* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004).

<sup>3</sup> Christopher J.H. Wright, *The Mission of God* (Downers Grove: Inter Varsity Press Academic, 2006), 55. Wright views Scripture as *metanarrative* in that it reveals the mission of God as "The Story" that encompasses all of creation, time, and humanity. It truthfully reveals; "the way things are, how they have come to be so, and what they ultimately will be." It is not metanarrative in the sense of the modernist view of being legitimated by "an appeal to universal reason" but as James K.A. Smith would claim, is "rather trusted in faith." James K.A. Smith, "A Little Story about Metanarratives: Lyotard, Religion, and Postmodernism Revisited," in *Christianity and the Postmodern Turn: Six Views*, ed. Myron B. Penner, 123-140 (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2005), 125.

is also the great danger that “knowing” might also move us to think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think. Paul argues that knowledge provided a liberating quality because Christians who are “knowledgeable” in the faith know idols are nothing and therefore they could eat meat offered to idols. But without the quality of mature love for God that creates a humble empathetic love for their neighbor, they lived in danger of thinking of themselves as superior and becoming indifferent to the struggles of those around them. In Christ, the motivation for participating in the arts and science as well as entering vocations such as business, social work, politics, etc. is inspired by a humble love for God and for the neighbor. Faith provides the “knowing.” Knowing God moves the disciple to hope in the *missio Dei* and the consummative event the Father initiated, the Son redeems, and the Spirit empowers. Finally, love for God and for neighbor defines the Christian’s motivation in entering and participating in the story of God’s mission.

Timothy Tennent’s motive for writing his most recent work *Invitation to World Missions: A Trinitarian Missiology for the Twenty-first Century*<sup>4</sup> resulted from his conviction that “the Trinity is the seminal relationship that lies behind all human relationships.”<sup>5</sup> This truth leads Tennent to propose a Trinitarian missiology that he believes is fundamental for the church’s “post-Christendom engagement with a relativistic, postmodern world.”<sup>6</sup> Tennent rightly asserts that immersing believers in Trinitarian theology is absolutely essential for the formation of an all-encompassing

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<sup>4</sup> Timothy C. Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions: A Trinitarian Missiology for the Twenty-first Century* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2010).

<sup>5</sup> Tennent, 78.

<sup>6</sup> Tennent, 78.

vision for missional church life.<sup>7</sup> Trinitarian theology, when rightly understood, synergizes the whole church (not just a select few) with a Trinity inspired, empowered and directed mandate.

A theology of the Social Trinity and subsequent Trinitarian based anthropology provides a new re-imagining for the ‘community’ of the church and the ‘personhood’ of all believers. The knowledge of the Trinity is, as theologian Catherine LaCugna phrases it, “ultimately a practical doctrine with radical consequences for Christian life.”<sup>8</sup> The truth of the Trinity is transformative even to the extent that this truth (through grace) changes the Christian’s identity ontologically and transforms the life and practice of the Church into communion with God. John D. Zizioulas uses the term communion as an ontological marker and refers to the Church as a “mode of being.”<sup>9</sup> Trinitarian thought, for those who seek to comprehend, is a radically transformative discovery of what constitutes the personhood of the believer. This redefining personhood transforms all relationships starting with experiencing God, expanding the meaning of family, church, and neighbors, and ultimately ending with a renewed relationship with all of creation.

One venue for the dissemination of a comprehensive missiology is by educating young adults in the Christian university with a strong Trinitarian Theology that equips them with a lifelong missional narrative. With this in mind, the culminating fruit

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<sup>7</sup> Missional living can be defined as living in the constant awareness of the *missio Dei* by fully embracing both in the life of the church and in the individual’s continual faithful witness about God’s work in the world. Missional living accepts no dichotomy in the Christian life between church, home, and the market place. All realms of life are under the sovereignty of God.

<sup>8</sup> Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (New York: HarperCollins, 1991), 1.

<sup>9</sup> John D. Zizioulas, *Being As Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1997), 15.

produced from the knowledge gained in writing this thesis is a curriculum proposal that incorporates both Relational Trinitarian Theology and its communal practice into what will be Lipscomb's Senior-year *Seminar in Vocational Ministry*.<sup>10</sup> It is hoped by beginning with this specific course, other Senior-year experiences will incorporate this curriculum in the future.

### **The Concept of the Capstone Course**

The contemporary idea of the Senior-year seminar follows in the tradition of the institutions of higher learning from the beginnings of Christian-oriented higher education in Colonial America.<sup>11</sup> In the 1980's, two groups of influential educators<sup>12</sup> argued the need for an integrated approach providing graduating college students with an *enriched major* that not only provided young adults with in-depth technical skills (as expected by any vocation), but with an equally proportional emphasis, and promoted the significance of that vocation in order for the student to discover passion and purpose in their future profession. One of the leading educators in this move was Ernest Boyer who framed the enriched major in terms of asking three essential questions: 1. What is the history and tradition of the field to be examined? 2. What are the social and economic implications to be understood? And 3. What are the ethical and moral issues to be confronted?<sup>13</sup> Boyer and his team embraced the idea of a "Capstone Course", and suggested a senior year

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<sup>10</sup> This course is planned for the Fall Semester of 2012 at Lipscomb University.

<sup>11</sup> Christian higher education and the capstone course will be discussed in more detail in chapter four.

<sup>12</sup> Robert N. Bellha, Richard Madsen, William M. Sullivan, Ann Swindler and Steven M. Tipton, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley: University of California, 1985); Ernest L. Boyer, *College: The Undergraduate Experience in America* (New York: Harper & Row, 1987).

<sup>13</sup> Boyer, 109-110.

seminar for the purpose of integrating the accumulated coursework, skills, and knowledge of the college student before graduation. The goal of the Capstone course was to stimulate critical and creative thinking, develop problem solving strategies, and address ethical practices in vocation.

### **Theological Framework**

The Christian university's identity-forming dialogue for addressing Wright's list of most fundamental question is best accomplished by the language of the Trinitarian nature of God or, more specifically, the revealed nature of the social Trinity. The theology of Trinity is not just an intellectual exercise to "fine tune" the Christian understanding into the nature of the immanent Trinity, as important as that discussion has been in the history of theological thought. But in the incarnation of Jesus Christ, the economic Trinity speaks to the fundamental questions of human meaning and purpose. A Social Trinitarian worldview transforms vocation from a secular pursuit (determining a person's livelihood) to the Spirit's gifting for mission in the kingdom of God. The Trinity is moving creation in a particular direction as revealed in the *theodrama*<sup>14</sup> of the *missio Dei*. The Father creates the universe and sends the incarnate Son. The Son redeems creation and glorifies the Father. The Spirit, in unity with the Father and Son, consummates the work of the Son, not exclusively, but especially through the work of the Spirit in the Church. Through the action of the Holy Spirit, humans who open their lives to the work of God receive Jesus and the Spirit lives in them sanctifying both the church

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<sup>14</sup> Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 37-38. Vanhoozer defines *Theodrama* as God's action in the prime theater of the world itself and asserts that life is a divine-human interactive theatre. The implication being that theology involves both what God has said and done for the world and what we must say and do in grateful response." P 37-38

and the individual believer to participate in the work of God in the world. This Trinitarian worldview moves beyond the necessary application of Christian Ethics to the Christian's vocation. Vocation, for one who freely surrenders to the Lordship of Jesus Christ and seeks the direction of the Spirit living inside, witnesses to the Trinity (albeit imperfectly) at work in the world. Each Christian, moving fully into personhood, embraces his/her own uniqueness as part of the full participation of the Church within the fellowship of the Trinity. Vocation then becomes our unique gifting to humbly and fearfully participate in God's work of transformation to be transformed into the likeness of Jesus and to participate in God's good works in anticipation of His return.

As in the relationship of the Godhead, Christians do not become some kind of generic Christian where all become exact clones of Christ. The Trinity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit manifest themselves in their unique work in the *missio Dei*. In like manner, each Christian is individually and uniquely created and empowered to do good works reflecting the love and compassion of Christ to the world through their own particular gifting.<sup>15</sup> The uniqueness of personhood does not in some way diminish or exalt the individual in the church community but completes the work of God as each member contributes to the whole.<sup>16</sup> In the Trinitarian worldview, each person truly becomes human as a uniquely created person, redeemed and gifted to live in a way that speaks of our unique nature in Christ. The themes of the social Trinity highlighted in this paper include the nature of God in communion, personhood and the church, the mission of God, and the practice of Trinitarian theology in life and vocation. This Trinitarian

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<sup>15</sup> Ephesians 2:10.

<sup>16</sup> Stanley J. Grentz, *The Social God and the Relational Self: A Trinitarian Theology of the Imago Dei* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 333.

matrix will then be applied in the capstone course as the theological context for the college student to explore what it means to live missionally in their preparation for vocation as Christ-followers.

### **Relational Trinitarian Theology**

The recent theological literature concerning the nature of the social Trinity places a strong emphasis of identity and praxis for the Christian life in community. A review of this literature provides fresh insights in the process of missional formation and practices among young Christians in the environment of the Christian university allied with local churches. The literature and thought explored in this review focuses on the framework of social or relational Trinitarian theology and the subsequent implications for Christian life and practice.

### **Theological Anthropology in Relationship to Ecclesiology**

Social Trinitarian Theology provides a path of discovery into what it means to be relational human beings imaging the triune God. Stanley Grenz postulates that theological anthropology:

... engages in the quest to speak about humankind by viewing the human reality from the perspective of an understanding of God. By following this path, a theological anthropology influenced by the contemporary rebirth of Trinitarian theology describes the relational self not merely as person-in-relationship but as the ecclesial self, the new humanity in communion with the triune God.<sup>17</sup>

The ecclesial self, born through the Christ narrative embedded in Trinity, gives new shape to one's sense of personal identity and pulls both the participating individual and the church into a new eschatological future. The church that images the divine

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<sup>17</sup> Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self*, 312.



relationship is as Grenz summarizes is “one, holy, catholic, and apostolic in that it engages in a mission that is proclaiming, reconciling, sanctifying and unifying.”<sup>18</sup>

### **Christian Higher Education and the Challenges of Forming An Integrated Learning Community**

The work of Christian higher education in the modern/post modern paradigm is a very important solidarity structure that sustains and shapes the church’s understanding of herself and God. I explore recent literature addressing contributions from educators within higher education that best supports Christian missional formation. This theme of the nature of Christian higher education addresses the shaping of a Christian worldview, addresses the nature of Scripture (or as Kevin Vanhoozer names it, “the drama of doctrine”) that shapes a sustainable epistemology in the eyes of a skeptical, questioning culture. This becomes very important as students move out of the university environment of learning to engage and participate in the Biblical narrative contextualized in our contemporary world. While I believe this is a larger discussion that should penetrate and permeate all of the Christian university experience, I have been afforded the opportunity to propose the theological part of a capstone curriculum for Senior college students in a new program encouraging students to graduate with a double major in 2012. This is a program that encourages students to major in one career track while simultaneously majoring in bible and ministry. The capstone course is titled for now “Seminar in Vocational Ministry”.

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<sup>18</sup> Stanley J. Grenz, *Renewing the Center: Evangelical Theology in a Post-Theological Era* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000), 321.

## Interdisciplinary Studies and Curriculum Designing for Young Adults

The venue provided at Lipscomb University is an ideal opportunity for the development of a Trinitarian curriculum for missional living as the theological vision. The purpose of this literature review is to draw from the best practices for stimulating learning tasks that encourage the young adult learner to visualize what their future looks like as participants in church and God's kingdom, given the gifting and preparation their previous years as an undergraduate have provided them.

The specific design for this capstone course allows professors from both sides of the double major to encourage students to explore in a focused way the ramifications of their choice in "secular" majors as a commitment of a lifetime to Christian ministry. For this capstone course, a matrix of Trinitarian insights guides students into the discovery of the missional life as participants with God and the church community in the *missio Dei*. While this course is specifically for those desiring to pursue a second major, it is my hope that this material may eventually be integrated in some way into the curriculum of all the Senior capstone courses on the undergraduate level.

## Development of Curriculum

The final part of this thesis will be 12 interactive sessions<sup>19</sup> focused on the Theology of the Social Trinity and its implications for praxis in Christian living. These twelve interactive sessions will be divided into three units focused on: 1. Reaching upward. 2. Reaching inward. 3. Reaching outward. Each unit will include four sections.

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<sup>19</sup> Adapted from Grant & McTighe, Jay Wiggins, *Understanding by Design: Backwards Design Process*, University of Missouri, January 19, 2009, <http://www.digitalliteracy.mwg.org/documents/template.pdf> (accessed November 14, 2011).

## The Question of Formation and Measuring Academic and Spiritual Preparedness

The goal of working with fourth year university students is to immerse them in the lifelong learning and practice of Trinitarian theology thereby providing the vision and motivation for living within the *missio Dei* by means of a fully integrated Christian life. The capstone course for double majors (one major constituting a career track and the other studies in Bible and ministry) provides the students an opportunity to direct, internalize, and combine knowledge and skills into a theology for the missional life. The capstone course design provides the student with the opportunity to consciously theologize (previewing Dyrness and his use of *oratio*, *meditatio*, and *tentatio* in chapter four) and take personal ownership in an integrated form of all academic, social, and spiritual experiences of the four-year college experience. The course design will utilize cognitive, affective, and psychomotor learning driven by a student-centered and student-directed initiative requiring comprehension, analysis, and synthesis of acquired knowledge and skills throughout the university experience. The student will have the challenge of addressing the vocation-specific imagination of what a particular vocation looks like as a representation of life and purpose in the kingdom that flows out of Trinitarian theology.

Lipscomb University is a Christian-based learning community whose distinctiveness lies precisely in the practice of a Christian theological interpretive framework uniting the sacred and the secular through faith and discipleship in Jesus Christ. The Lipscomb community believes that the triune God reveals the fullness of God to the world in the incarnation of Jesus. This epistemologically holistic encounter with

God is the context that empowers Christians to live fully missional lives, incorporating their gifting and skills into their passion for God and God's passion for the world. The Christian university's work at hand is to address more fundamental questions (in addition to Boyer's three questions) at the heart and mind of the majority of today's students. Christopher Wright, in his magisterial book *The Mission of God*, lists the deeper questions that the Christian university must energetically respond to: 1. Where we have come from? 2. How did we get to be here? 3. Who are we? 4. Why is the world so messed up? 5. Is there any hope that things will be changed for the better? 6. What is our ultimate destiny?<sup>20</sup> The response must be effectively communicated and disseminated into all realms of human existence. In other words, the response must be a theology that works in the home, at work, and in the church. It must be integrated into the heart, the head, and into the daily work and play of life. The narrative framework of scripture as God's revelation that answers these questions must be communicated both in teaching and learning, as well as illustrated in practice, to effectively counter the powerfully pervasive skeptical pluralistic worldview that is the environment of our Western culture today.

#### Lipscomb University's Values

The mission of Lipscomb University is to provide both undergraduate and graduate education in the liberal arts and sciences. This mission is to provide a Christian education in the classroom and provide venues that encourage involvement in local churches and the larger community.

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<sup>20</sup> Christopher J.H. Wright, 533.

The stated core values of Lipscomb University include the pursuit of:

- **Christ likeness**  
Lipscomb exists because of the redemptive power of Jesus Christ. The constant aim is for each member of the Lipscomb family to grow in His image.
- **Truth**  
Truth is sought in each class and should be lived out in the behavior and speech of each employee and student.
- **Excellence**  
In every facet of our work, Lipscomb University seeks the highest level of performance and service. “Perpetual improvement” is the mantra for each class, department, or administrative area.
- **Service**  
Everything we do and teach should reflect the second great command “to love your neighbor as yourself.” Knowledge acquired and skills gained are to be used to bless the lives of others.<sup>21</sup>

The institutional vision beyond the standard fare of academic excellence includes the provision of activities that promote spiritual growth by means of “the faithful teaching of the Word of God, a faith-informed learning approach to all academic disciplines, and an environment that encourages service to others.”<sup>22</sup>

The university is a major influencer of the world as Charles Malik<sup>23</sup> so aptly framed it. Education is the key for anyone aspiring to influence society – be it politics, the sciences, law, medicine, or a myriad of other professions. From the university come the leaders and teachers within the church. These leaders are capable of recasting the church’s vision of the revealed Triune God, the *missio Dei* that births the missional church. The capstone course as a culminating senior year experience provides the ideal

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<sup>21</sup> Lipscomb University, *Who We Are: Mission, Values, Vision*, 2010, <http://www.lipscomb.edu/page.asp?SID=4&Page=3169> (accessed November 21, 2010).

<sup>22</sup> Lipscomb University, *Who We Are: Mission, Values, Vision*.

<sup>23</sup> Malik, “The Two Tasks,” 289-296.

educational environment encouraging young Christians to own their faith and embrace the missional life found in the missio Dei of Trinity.

### **The Three Movements to be Developed**

#### **Movement 1: Upward – Knowing the Triune God – Transformation into Personhood**

This movement, focusing on spiritual formation, involves the student in readings, dialogue and reflections concerning their conversion, their relationship in communion with God and the matrix of Trinitarian life as it flows into kingdom living. Utilizing readings from John Zizioulas,<sup>24</sup> Catherine LaCugna,<sup>25</sup> and others, students will explore the implications of the Christian's ontological identity with the eternal God through Jesus Christ that moves us into the love of the Father and the indwelling of the Spirit. Through readings and discussion, the students will be encouraged to reflect on the revelation of the unique relational qualities of the Three-in-One that provides insight into humanity and into their unique gifting and ongoing preparation as participants in God's kingdom. The students will read and reflect on the nature of the kingdom of God in the 'yet but not yet' and the work of the creative love of the Father, the redemptive love of the Son, and the consummative love of the Spirit as God continues to act in the unfolding of kingdom until Jesus returns in His glory. The course will explore the meaning of salvation as it is manifested in the present and the future times, i.e. salvation is something that believers are experiencing now in the love of the Father, redemption of the Son and transformation of the Spirit.

As part of this movement, group sessions will be encouraged to provide an opportunity for student to share reflections on their college experience and how that

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<sup>24</sup> Zizioulas, *Being As Communion*.

<sup>25</sup> LaCugna, *God for Us*.

experience has contributed to or impeded their relationship with God and community. There will also be a retreat addressing the need for spiritual formation and the spiritual disciplines.

## Movement 2: Inward – Knowing Ourselves – Living as Community

The role of narrative in personal identity formation is a critical theme in the last chapter of Stanley Grenz's book *The Social God and the Relational Self*. Grenz aptly summarizes the nature of identity formation as each individual Christian first encounters and embraces the call for community with Trinity:

Being-in-relationship with the triune God by means of participation in the Jesus narrative and hence incorporation into Christ by the Spirit not only inherently includes but also is even comprised by being-in-relationship with those who participate together in that identity-producing narrative and thereby are the ecclesial sign in the present of the eschatological new humanity. Furthermore, participation in the Christian community not only includes reformulating one's personal narrative in accordance with the story of Jesus but also means accepting the story of the Christian community as one's own.<sup>26</sup>

The revelation through the Son illuminates *perichosis* of the Father, Son, and Spirit that empowers persons surrendered to Christ to enter a new reality of communion in the church.<sup>27</sup> That communion, both with Trinity and church, provides the movement for the individual and the church to be transformed into the *imago Dei*. The scope of these four interactive sessions focus on the exploration of the meaning of community, becoming fully human, realizing our full potential, appreciation for diversity, and unity in the Spirit through living for each other.

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<sup>26</sup> Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self*, 331.

<sup>27</sup> The Luke account in Acts of the early church beginnings starts with one's acceptance of God's grace and the Lordship of Jesus Christ at which time one is placed in the church fellowship. Surrender to the Lordship of Christ adds a multidimensional nature to community. The new Christian is brought into fellowship with the Triune God through the Son and added to His church that in turn, responding out of love and obedience reflects the image of *perichosis* through the church in the world. Acts 2:41-47

### Movement 3: Outward – Participation in the missio Dei

This movement will explore the nature of God's mission, suffering, and passion to bring all creation to its final consummation in the Father, and the nature of the church that embraces the mission of God to bring glory to the Father, Son, and Spirit. As part of that exploration, the students will reflect on how believers (as individuals and as a community) mirror the creative nature of the Father, the redemptive work of the Son, and the consummative work of the Spirit. The church gives testimony to the world of the presence of God breaking into the world and the coming Eschaton through practicing forgiveness, long-suffering and compassion, justice, and mercy, as she is transformed into the image of God.

This section will be some of the most creative for the students as they reflect on their giftedness in vocation as it applies to their participation in the missio Dei. Whether it is participating in genetic research to save an endangered species, working with Mayan believers to bring clean water to their community, or church planting in Mongolia, this section will explore the message and actions that embody participation in the kingdom of God. This section will encourage the student to reflect on how service and the spoken word concerning the Gospel merge into a coherent witness. During these sessions, the student will explore and interview Christian mentors who work in their field and seriously accept the challenge of witnessing for Christ. The students will do research and write a visioning paper as to how they see their participation in the kingdom of God through their giftedness.



## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW RELATIONAL TRINITARIAN THEOLOGY**

The seminal event of the incarnation of the Son, his subsequent life, death, and resurrection left all paradigms for understanding God and humanity woefully inadequate. The early church, with its strong Jewish heritage, struggled with this new reality that Jesus the Messiah was also God in the flesh. Yet Jesus had lived among them and received the unmistakable acknowledgment from the Father that he was also the only begotten Son, and unmistakably witnessed to by the Spirit, both in his ministry and ultimately in the resurrection. In the very early years of the Church, this truth was expressed in worship and witness. But as the church moved from Jerusalem into the Greek world, this basic Christian truth conflicted with the plausibility structures of the Greek philosophers and other religions. This forced the church to articulate a defense of the worship of a Triune God. This articulation of faith in the Trinity would always prove inadequate through the use of finite human language to speak of the mysterious and infinite: inadequate, yet necessary.

The Development of Trinitarian doctrine, beyond the first few decades of the early church and the formation of the New Testament writings, resulted largely from the need for the church to express herself adequately in worship and faithfully witness to the incarnation, death, and resurrection of the Son. Beyond witness and worship, starting almost immediately at the establishment of the Church, it became necessary to define the parameters of orthodoxy as to the nature of this eternal Triune God in order to repudiate syncretistic heretical teachings emerging inside the Christian community. In the active contextualization of the Gospel, as the church moved from what was essentially a

Hebrew environment into the Greek world, she entered in dialogue with Greek and Roman philosophical and religious concepts that required of her a more robust articulation and defense of the Trinitarian Faith.

The First Council of Nicaea (A.D. 325) centered on the nature of Jesus and his relationship with the Father. This council was in response to a growing conflict that arose within the church (represented best by the teaching of Arius) that stemmed from an attempt to maintain the likeness of Jesus to the Father while also preserving his inequality; given Christ's lesser nature as an emanation from God and capable of suffering. For the Church Fathers, this teaching called into question the ability of Jesus Christ to redeem mankind and challenged the Church's perception of the nature of the essence of Jesus. The culminating result of this first inter-church argument led to the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (A.D. 381) and the refutation of Arian teaching.<sup>1</sup> The council based its repudiation of the teachings of Arias upon the claims of Jesus found in the teaching of the Apostles in scripture and the apostolic tradition passed down to the bishops. The Creed unequivocally declares the full deity of Christ and his equality with the Father. The council's main achievement lay in the embracing of the Son as begotten (not made) of the substance of the Father in eternity. The council also affirmed the divinity of the Spirit, thus solidifying the place of "Trinitarian Doctrine" as the centerpiece of Christian faith.

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph Wilhem. "The Nicene Creed" *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: Robert Appleton company, 1911) <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11049a.htm> (accessed August 5,2011).

The Council of Ephesus (A.D. 431) repudiated Nestorianism<sup>2</sup> that held that the spiritual nature of Christ only loosely co-inhabited the body of Jesus. Therefore Mary cannot be correctly called “the mother of God” and should be considered only the mother of the human Christ. Effectively, this heresy repudiated any idea of the *Logos* being born or suffering. For Nestorius and his followers, the union of the two natures was only moral and not personal (hypostatic). The council repudiated this belief and upheld the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (A.D. 381). The Chalcedonian Council in (A.D. 541) affirmed that the divine nature of the Son was from the substance (*homoousia*) of the Father and there was no inferiority of essence.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, the humanity of Jesus is of the same substance of created humanity so that his humanity implies a complete identification as a human being. The two natures (divine and human) are found to be in union (*hypostasis*) and therefore the same person is fully God and man. Jesus is one person who subsists through two natures.<sup>4</sup>

The issue for the church shifted at this point in history from determining the elemental validity of defining the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as Trinity, to the manner in which the Trinity relates in comprising “one” God. The Cappadocian Fathers, in their attempt to navigate the narrow path between the errors of tritheism and modalism,

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<sup>2</sup> While the heresy bears the name of Nestor there is real doubt concerning whether these views are really to be attributed to him. The main progenitor is considered to be Theodore the Bishop of Mopsuestia (428). Chrysoston Baur, ed., *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 14. (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1912), s.v. “Theodore of Mopsuestia,” <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14571b.htm> (accessed October 19, 2011).

<sup>3</sup> “Council of Chalcedon, Extracts from the Acts” (NPNF<sup>2</sup> 14:243-292).

<sup>4</sup> Francis Schaefer, ed., *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1912), s.v. “Council of Chalcedon,” <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03555a.htm> (accessed October 19, 2011); See also, *To Flavian* (NPNF<sup>2</sup> 12:38-43).

formulated what would become the classic doctrinal understanding for Christian orthodoxy: God is one *ousia* (being) but three *hypostases* (realities).

### **Traditional Approaches to Trinitarian Doctrine**

To speak in terms of trends in the historical development of Christian doctrine is useful and dangerous at the same time. Generalizing two thousand years of historical Trinitarian doctrine fails to do justice to the complexities of so many insightful Christian thinkers, their respective cultural environments, and the problems they addressed. The truth concerning Trinitarian doctrine is that models have their own particular strengths (resolving some problems) and inadequacies (in fully demonstrating the infinite with finite constructs). Then there is the problem of speaking of God through the use of limited and finite language that will always be inadequate in describing the “mystery” that is the Triune God.

The Greek Fathers reflected on the Trinity by examining the different ways in which they experienced the Father, Son, and Spirit. This Eastern focus highlighted the distinctive roles within the Trinity in terms of creation, reconciliation, and consummation. Their understanding of God starts with the Father as the source and origin of all divinity. The Father eternally communicates all of his substance to the Son and the Holy Spirit. In this definition, the oneness of God is preserved since the essence of the Trinity is consubstantial. The danger with this understanding, however, lies in the implied genesis of God and consequently, a doctrine of hierarchical subordinationism.

Augustine’s understanding of the Trinity best characterizes the doctrine primarily held in the Western Church. In his influential work *On the Trinity: Book IV*,<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Augustine, *On the Trinity* 4 (NPNF<sup>1</sup> 3:69-86).

Augustine's doctrine of God starts with the unity of the Godhead and focuses on the divine or spiritual nature that is revealed through the analysis of the human psyche. Augustine understood humanity to be the apex of Creation described in Genesis 1:28 as the "image" of God and believed that through the use of analogy, the human psyche could provide insights into the Godhead. Augustine speaks of the human soul as possessing the distinct qualities of mind, love, and intelligence. Later in the same document Augustine rephrases these qualities in terms of knowledge, memory, and will. Thus, the unity and distinctiveness represented in the human mind between these three interrelated qualities mirrors the union and distinction manifested in the Triune God.<sup>6</sup> In *On the Trinity*, Augustine taught that the Spirit proceeds from the Father and from the Son. In doing so, he went beyond the Nicene Creed adopted both by the East and the West, which recognized the Spirit proceeding only from the Father.

Subsequent synods of the West incorporated Augustine's view and changed the Latin translation of the Nicene Creed to reflect the Spirit's procession from the Father, adding the Latin word *filioque* ("and from the Son"). This modification of the Nicene Creed sowed the seed of discord between the Eastern and Western Churches, eventually culminating in the Great Schism in 1054 that separated the Orthodox and Roman Catholic communities into two divergent groups. This separation launched the distinct communities on two distinct but parallel trajectories in their understanding of the Doctrine of the Trinity.

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<sup>6</sup>Stanley J. Grenz, *Rediscovering the Triune God: The Trinity in Contemporary Theology* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 2004), 9. Subsequent contributors to this model commonly paraphrased the Trinitarian distinction in terms of the mind, self-knowledge, and self-love.

Saint Augustine's psychological model continued to dominate Western thinking during the medieval period with a continued refinement of Trinitarian Theology that stressed the wholly 'Other' and eternal God. Thomas Aquinas is credited with completing the work of Augustine by producing a "highly logical Trinitarian system."<sup>7</sup>

In the years following Aquinas, a general agreement exists among Theologians that the doctrine of the Trinity diminished in importance during the Renaissance and Enlightenment periods. The primary contributing factors for this demise of a vibrant Trinitarian faith in Western theology seems to reside in both the growth of popular piety and the emphasis on individual religious experience. With this emphasis, Trinitarian thought was considered simply too complex for all practical purposes. By the end of the eighteenth century, Protestant faith accepted Trinitarian teaching but largely considered the doctrine of the Trinity inconsequential. By the time of the nineteenth century, many, including Thomas Jefferson, considered Trinitarian thinking absurd. Even if the Trinity was still acknowledged by the mainstream churches, the practical result was the church lived out the Christian faith in a Monotheistic world.

### **Contemporary Thought on the Social Trinity**

The literature highlighted in this review is largely concerned with the framework of social or relational Trinitarian theology and the subsequent implications for Christian life and practice. For the sake of this project, emphasis will be placed on the framework or matrix for Christian life and practice rather than the intricacies of the arguments proving the correct social model.

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<sup>7</sup> Leonardo Boff, *Trinity and Society*, trans. Paul Burns (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1988), 57.

## Karl Barth – “God Reveals Himself”

Karl Barth is generally acknowledged as the catalyst for the renewed interest in Trinitarian theology in the twentieth century. Barth writes from a desire to refute the nineteenth-century left-wing philosophical premise that all talk about God (theology) is merely the anthropological projections of man. Barth contends that what humanity can know or say about God is not resultant from below (anthropological phenomenon) but through truthful revelation from above. Barth launches his monumental work *Church Dogmatics* by placing the theme of the Trinity at the beginning of his voluminous opus, thereby reclaiming the preeminence Trinitarian doctrine.<sup>8</sup>

Barth’s investigation of Trinity begins with the premise that fallen humanity is incapable of any kind of Divine knowledge about God without revelation from God. Humanity knows about God because “God reveals Himself. He reveals Himself *through Himself. He reveals Himself.*”<sup>9</sup> Though awkward in the English translation, this statement puts forth the Barth’s premise that understanding God is Trinity, is because of his revelation of the Godself through the work of God in history. For Barth, nothing can be said about God without the clear foundation of God as the “revealer, the revealed, and the being revealed.”<sup>10</sup> True knowledge of God can only be received through God’s self-disclosure. This revelation is grounded in God’s historical relationship with Israel and the Church and culminates in the incarnate person of Jesus Christ.

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<sup>8</sup> Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics II.I The Doctrine of God*. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark LTD., 1957).

<sup>9</sup> Barth, 296.

<sup>10</sup> Barth, 363.

Barth denounces the supporting Greek philosophical assumptions prominent in liberal philosophy that assumed an eternal God detached from the temporal world. Barth sees God's self-revelation in the Word is in itself the unveiling of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Barth sums up the unveiling in the terse statement: "God reveals Himself as the Lord." He continues:

Revelation is the revelation of lordship and therewith it is the revelation of God. For the Godhead of God, what man does not know and God must reveal to him, and according to the witness of Scripture does reveal to him, is lordship. Lordship is present in revelation because its reality and truth are so fully self-grounded, because it does not need any other actualization or validation than that of its actual occurrence, because it is revelation through itself and not in relation to something else, because it is that self-contained *novuni*. Lordship means freedom.<sup>11</sup>

What God reveals in scripture is the Immanent Trinity and thus, the answer to Barth's three fold question: Who does God reveal himself to be? In what way does God reveal himself? And what are the consequences of that revelation?<sup>12</sup>

Barth succeeds in moving the Immanent Trinity into the temporal realm by exclusively basing all dialogue about God upon God's self-revelation. The very fact that God moves to communicate the Godself to humanity through a free act of will places the emphasis on God as a relational being and opens the door for further investigation. But while Barth holds that God is identical to the act of revelation, he is not willing to conclude that the eternal essence (Immanent Trinity) is completely reducible to the work of God in the temporal (Economic Trinity).

In this work of His, God is revealed to us. All we can know of God according to the witness of Scripture are His acts. All we can say of God, all the attributes we can assign to God, relate to these acts of His, not, then, to His essence as such.

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<sup>11</sup> Barth, 306.

<sup>12</sup> Barth, 297-299.



Though the work of God is the essence of God, it is necessary and important to distinguish His essence as such from His work, remembering that this work is grace, a free divine decision, and also remembering that we can know about God only because and to the extent that He gives Himself to us to be known.<sup>13</sup>

By addressing revelational theology, Barth is forced to address the controversy spanning over two thousand years concerning the way in which the Three of the Trinity should be perceived. Barth rejects the long-used term of *person* to describe the Three, responding that the modern understanding of person is conceived in terms of the individual. He argues that *person*, as used in contemporary times, “is its own subjective spiritual center of action and freedom”, that if applied to the Trinity, results in tritheism. For this reason, Barth prefers the term *modes of being* in place of *person* to describe the Trinity and thereby seeks to avoid the aforementioned danger.<sup>14</sup> Instead, Barth links person or personhood exclusively to the oneness of God. Referring to personhood Barth writes, “we are speaking not of three divine I’s, but thrice of one divine I.”<sup>15</sup> Barth struggles in linking person with the one divine ‘I’ as exalted in eternity and restricting the three *modes of being* of God’s self-revelation to his work in the temporal realm. Here, the success of Barth’s terminology is contested as his term *modes of being* has been generally discarded due to its implicit gravitation towards modalism.

Barth does not contribute a great deal of specificity in regards to the ways in which God’s self-revelation as relational Trinity is manifest in the Christian life and practice. He broaches the subject as a covenantal partnership, which he sees working in the imago Dei of Genesis 1:28. God has endowed humanity to exist in a covenantal

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<sup>13</sup> Barth, 371.

<sup>14</sup> Barth, 355.

<sup>15</sup> Barth, 351.

relationship with God that in turn gives humans the position of lordship over the earth as God's representative.<sup>16</sup> Barth's writings speak to God's connection with man through Christ. In doing so, he links Christian life and practice exclusively to Christology rather than any kind of Trinitarian relational model. All of that dialogue will have to be examined by those who follow in his footsteps.

Barth's major contribution is the restoration of a Trinitarian theology based on God's self-revelation in the acts of God working in history as told in the narrative of Scripture. This restoration in turn moved the study of mankind from an anthropocentric, enlightenment mode of self-discovery to a revival of the discussion of humanity from the perspective of theological anthropology. Barth's approach to God as Trinity continued to emphasize the oneness of God, but that focus did not prevent him from establishing the doctrine of Trinitarian self-revelation as central to all continuing theological discussion.

### **Karl Rahner "The 'Economic' Trinity is the 'Immanent' Trinity"**

Of the Catholic Theologians writing in the twentieth century, the German theologian Karl Rahner is recognized as one of the most influential thinkers elevating Trinitarian theology once again to its rightful position at center stage in Christianity. His investigation concerning the Trinity is best represented in the English translation of *The Trinity*. The most famous of his dictums concerning the Trinity is the axiom: "The 'economic' Trinity is the 'immanent' Trinity and the 'immanent' Trinity is the 'economic' Trinity."<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Karl Barth, 181-187.

<sup>17</sup> Karl Rahner, *The Trinity* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Co., 1997), 22.

Rahner's articulation of this axiom was meant to shift the direction of Catholic Theology away from the neo-scholastic speculation about the inner dynamics of God separated from creation, back to the true Trinitarian revelation of the Father, Son, and Spirit. Rahner argues that the true unveiling of the Godself as existing in eternity is truly manifest in the divine self-communication of God in salvation history. Rahner's axiom is significant in that it marks the transition from a seemingly exclusive focus on the speculative discussion of God's ontological oneness in the eternal realm, to the complete self-revelation of the Triune God through the Godself's *soteriological* work in the temporal realm.

Rahner sees the work of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in the economy of salvation as revealing the ontological uniqueness within the Trinity. A good illustration of this is found in his remarks concerning the incarnation of Jesus:

Jesus is not simply God in general, but the Son. The second divine person, God's Logos, is man, and only he is man. Hence there is at least one "mission," one presence in the world, one reality of salvation history which is not merely appropriated to some divine person, but which is proper to him. Here we are not merely speaking "about" this person in the world. Here something occurs "outside" the intra-divine life in the world itself, something which is not a mere effect of the efficient causality of the triune God acting as one in the world, but something which belongs to the Logos alone, which is the history of one divine person, in contrast to the other divine persons.<sup>18</sup>

But Rahner cautions later on in his book that we must be careful not to see this act in some way isolated from the Father and the Spirit. Rahner writes:

Of course, this self-communication of the persons occurs according to their personal peculiarity, that is, also according to and in virtue of their mutual relations. Should a divine person communicate himself otherwise than in and through his relations to the other persons, so as to have his own relation to the justified (and the other way around), this would presuppose that each single divine person, even as such, as mentally distinct from the one and same essence,

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<sup>18</sup> Rahner, 23.

would be something absolute and not merely relative. We would no longer be speaking of the Trinity.<sup>19</sup>

Rahner sees the Eternal Three equally revealed in the world according to their own uniqueness and equally revealing their oneness. Following his explanation of the incarnation of the Son in the world, Rahner continues in the same way addressing the revelation of the eternal Father and the Spirit to the world:

... these three self communications are the self-communication of the one God in the three relative ways in which God subsists. The Father gives himself to us too as *Father*, that is, precisely because and insofar as he himself, being essentially with *himself*, utters himself and *in this way* communicates the Son as his own, personal self-manifestation; and because and insofar as the Father and the Son (receiving from the Father), welcoming each other in love, drawn and returning to each other, communicate themselves *in this way*, as received in mutual love, that is, as Holy Spirit. God relates to us in a threefold manner and this threefold, free and gratuitous relation to us *is* not merely a copy or an analogy of the inner Trinity, but this Trinity itself, albeit as freely and gratuitously communicated.<sup>20</sup>

For Rahner, the economic self-communication of the Triune God *is* the eternal triune God with us that; “entails not only God’s presence in human history as Logos in the incarnation but also God’s presence in grace as Spirit in divinizing the human person in the innermost center of individual existence.”<sup>21</sup>

While Barth and Rahner have many identifiable differences<sup>22</sup> in their approach to the Trinity, both arrive at many similar conclusions. Barth argues that the Trinity is shown in the revealer, the revealed, and the being revealed of God’s self-revelation and holds that there is no other way for mankind to possess knowledge of God. Rahner argues

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<sup>19</sup> Rahner, 35.

<sup>20</sup> Rahner, 35.

<sup>21</sup> Stanley J. Grenz, *Rediscovering the Triune God: The Trinity in Contemporary Theology* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 2004), 61.

<sup>22</sup> One difference is that Rahner is not as opposed to the philosophical or anthropological approach to God.

that no other than the Immanent Trinity is fully revealed in the salvation history narrated in scripture. God is revealed both in eternity and in the temporal realm to be the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Both argue that humans can truly know and relate to the Triune God because the work of the Father, Son, and Spirit make it possible.

Both Barth and Rahner uphold the Trinity as true to God's self-revelation and yet remain closely identified with approaching God first of all as the one divine subject.<sup>23</sup> While both open up the importance of the Trinity to Christian doctrine and generate considerable discussion by bringing new life to Trinitarian thought, neither really applies the social or relational nature within the Trinity in any practical way as a mode of being for the Christian life principally, presumably because their focus is still tied to the Western emphasis on the one divine subject.

### **Jurgen Moltmann – "Axiom of God's Passion"**

Jurgen Moltmann, following in the footsteps of Barth and Rahner, argues for the centrality of Trinitarian doctrine and the identification of the immanent trinity with the economic trinity. Moltmann likewise argues that the foundation of Christian theology is the Trinity's self-revelation found in Scripture, but then sharply moves away from the focus on the one divine subject toward a focus on the Three (emphasizing persons) within the narrative of Biblical history.

Moltmann's beginning point in *The Trinity and the Kingdom* asserts that the Trinity is first and foremost a God of relationship. He argues that the approaches to God through the philosophical and metaphysical constructs that held primacy in the West

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<sup>23</sup> Jurgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom*. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 144-148.

blinds mankind to the true nature of God. He calls these approaches, “the Greek axiom of God’s apathy”<sup>24</sup> arguing that the resulting paradigm leaves God distant and aloof from creation. Moltmann holds that seeing God as distant and aloof erroneously leaves Christians as being essentially on their own in following the commands of Christ until his return, at which time each will be judged according to their level of obedience and sent either to heaven or hell. Moltmann asserts this resulting focus on a “moral monotheism” created for the church an unhealthy obsession of the Christian life based on ethical and pragmatic concerns that has little regard for the doctrine of the Trinity. The consequence of ignoring Trinitarian doctrine thereby creates an impoverished and unattractive Christian life driven by “a matter of law and compulsion.”<sup>25</sup>

Moltmann argues that the Trinity is the eternal Three relationally united as one in love. God as presented in the narrative of Scripture is really not aloof and indifferent at all but historically revealed to be very near to us. Moltmann envisions a renewal of a vibrant faith lived out in the love and life of the church faithfully bearing witness to the presence of the Trinity with all of creation:

We understand the scriptures as the testimony to the history of the Trinity’s relations of fellowship, which are open to men and women, and open to the world. This trinitarian hermeneutics leads us to think in terms of relationships and communities; it supersedes the subjective thinking which cannot work without the separation and isolation of its objects. Here, thinking in relationships and communities is developed out of the doctrine of the Trinity, and is brought to bear on the relation of men and women to God, to other people and to mankind as a whole, as well as on their fellowship with the whole of creation. By taking up panentheistic ideas from the Jewish and the Christian traditions, we shall try to think ecologically about God, man and the world in their relationships and indwellings. In this way it is not merely the Christian doctrine of the Trinity that we are trying to work out anew; our aim is to develop and practice Trinitarian

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<sup>24</sup> Moltmann, 22.

<sup>25</sup> Moltmann, 8-9.

thinking as well.<sup>26</sup>

By linking men and women relationally to the inner circle of the Trinity, Moltmann opens our understanding of the Christian life lived through the grace of God and being intimately connected ontologically to the Trinity through the Son. Through participating in the communion of the Trinity and in anticipation of the full consummation in the Eschaton, the very nature of the Father, Son, and Spirit opening in relationship to creation serves as normative for the Christian life and practice.

Moltmann's counter for the "axiom of apathy" is the "axiom of God's passion."<sup>27</sup> He argues that the apathetic axiom put forth by the Greeks is true in that it rightly says that God is not subjected to suffering in the same way as mortal creation resulting from a deficiency of being. The suffering of God is distinct from the suffering of creation and can only be exclusively applied to the Trinity in the mystery of creation. Moltmann believes that creation is the "superabundance and overflowing of being" that he calls "the eternal love affair between the Father and the Son." The Spirit whose uniqueness in Trinity, Moltmann believes is best thought of in terms of God's glory and unity continually moving in the Father's outpouring of His love for the Son. The focus of divine activity is a progression of a shifting pattern of relationships among the three persons of the Trinity. The history of creation is understood in terms of what Moltmann

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<sup>26</sup> Moltmann, 19-20.

<sup>27</sup> Moltmann, 22.

calls “the tragedy of the divine love”<sup>28</sup> but in this progression, Christians must also see the history of redemption “as the feast of divine joy.”<sup>29</sup>

This means that the creation of the world and human beings for freedom and fellowship is always bound up with the process of God’s deliverance from the sufferings of his love. His love, which liberates, delivers and redeems through suffering, wants to reach its fulfillment in the love that is bliss. But love only finds bliss when it finds its beloved, liberates them, and has them eternally at his side. For that reason and in this sense the deliverance or redemption of the world is bound up with the self-deliverance of God from his sufferings. In this sense, not only does God suffer with and for the world; liberated men and women suffer with God and for him. The theology of God’s passion leads to the idea of God’s self-subjection to suffering. It therefore also has to arrive at the idea of God’s eschatological self-deliverance. Between these two movements lies the history of the profound fellowship between God and man in suffering — in compassionate suffering with one another, and in passionate love for one another.<sup>30</sup>

The culmination of the love of God acting in history anticipates reaching the final goal of the ultimate liberation of the cosmos itself, realized within the Trinity, to the glory of the Godself.

The Trinity revealed in scripture in terms of persons and movements within relationship, Moltmann argues, addresses many past harmful misconceptions held by much of the church throughout history. This is where Moltmann parts ways from Barth because he believes Barth is still tied to the classical conception of “Lordship.”<sup>31</sup>

The classical view of freedom and lordship conceived of the One God’s omnipotent freedom and actions in terms of power, authority, and ownership over creation. Understood from this definition, God is believed to possess the freedom to dispose of his property (i.e. property including men and women) as he so chooses.

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<sup>28</sup> Moltmann, 59.

<sup>29</sup> Moltmann, 59.

<sup>30</sup> Moltmann, 60.

<sup>31</sup> Moltmann, 101.



Images such as ‘a distant supreme monarch’ and the ‘aloft demanding patriarchal father’ made it possible to project the same kind of God sanctioned structures upon society itself (including the church) contributing to damaging, unhealthy, and ungodly societal relations.

To counter these misconceptions, Moltmann introduces a different concept of freedom rising from the language of community and fellowship. He advocates restoring the Trinity to the center of the Christian faith. By restoring the Trinity, a different model of divine freedom emerges. The Triune God stands in opposition to the “monarch of individual freedom” that seeks the elevation of self through the domination over creation. The freedom offered to creation in scripture is not freedom in terms of choice over the disposition and control of the things that an individual possesses.<sup>32</sup>

In Moltmann’s definition of freedom, men and women are lifted out of slavery and given the kingdom of God through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. They are made inheritors of the Kingdom of God by being adopted into the sonship of Christ who is the “only begotten Son” and by grace the Son becomes the older brother: “In the context of the spirit of sonship, the sending of the Son shows nothing less than the opening of the fellowship of the Father to his own Son, and the opening of the fellowship of the Son to his Father, for the world.”<sup>33</sup> But Moltmann does not stop with sonship. He sees a progression of freedom that leads humanity into an ever deepening freedom. The Christian life is transformed from slavery, to the freedom of sonship, to the relation of

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<sup>32</sup> Moltmann, 213-218.

<sup>33</sup> Moltmann, 73.

‘friend’. The freedom offered to mankind through grace is the invitation to participate as God’s children and move into the intimate friendship of the eternal divine community:<sup>34</sup>

The triune God reveals himself as love in the fellowship of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. His freedom therefore lies in the *friendship* which he offers men and women, and through which he makes them his friends. His freedom is his vulnerable love, his openness, the encountering kindness through which he suffers with the human beings he loves and becomes their advocate, thereby throwing open their future to them. God demonstrates his eternal freedom through his suffering and his sacrifice, through his self giving and his patience. Through his freedom he keeps man, his image, and his world, creation, free — keeps them free and pays the price of their freedom. Through his freedom he waits for man’s love, for his compassion, for his own deliverance to his glory through man. Through his freedom he does not only speak as Lord, but listens to men and women as their Father.<sup>35</sup>

Just as with the Trinity, Moltmann believes that freedom for humanity must be thought of in terms of fully living in relationship and friendship. “This freedom,” writes Moltmann concerning what God is offering humanity, “consists of the mutual and common participation in life, and a communication in which there is neither lordship nor servitude. In their reciprocal participation in life, people become free beyond the limitation of their own individuality.”<sup>36</sup> Freedom then manifests itself in passionate love. “Love wants to live and to give life. It wants to open up the freedom to live.” Freedom then means freedom to love as God loves, which is something humanity could never realize without the passionate suffering love of God. Moltmann has generated a whirlwind of activity as scholars act and react to what he has written that will last long into the future.

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<sup>34</sup> Moltmann, 217.

<sup>35</sup> Moltmann, 56.

<sup>36</sup> Moltmann, 101.

Moltmann's exceptional contribution to Trinitarian thought provides in itself a multiplicity of avenues providing investigation into theological anthropology and providing a structural framework for teaching missional living. How does the Trinitarian relationship apply to the structure and communion within the church? What does it imply for the church's prophetic role for society at large? Moltmann's vision of the biblical Trinity includes all of creation, therefore begging the question of: What does Christian stewardship of resources look like as the church participates in faithfully anticipating the full consummation in God? How do the church and the individual Christian live as witnesses in hope of the new tomorrow? How does a Trinitarian vision of personhood and uniqueness in terms of giftedness shape vocation; especially when Christians begin to see vocation as being in relationship with creation and open to the world?

### **John D. Zizioulas "Being as Communion"**

John Zizioulas introduces his book *Being as Communion* by asserting: "The Church is not simply an institution. She is a 'mode of existence', *a way of being*. The mystery of the church, even in its institutional dimension, is deeply bound to the being of man, to the being of the world and to the very being of God."<sup>37</sup> The central theme around which the book revolves is the theme of 'personhood', first demonstrated and defined in the Trinity and secondly in humanity fully becoming what God desires.

Zizioulas holds that the fundamental nature of the Trinity should be seen as a communion of persons. Recalling his Orthodox heritage, Zizioulas looks to the Greek Fathers' approach to the Trinity starting first with a focus on personhood (*hypostasis*) of the Three and then contrasts that to the Western heritage emphasis on the oneness of God

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<sup>37</sup> John D. Zizioulas, *Being As Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997), 15.

defined by one substance (*ousia*). Zizioulas recognizes that both perspectives are inaugurated through the struggle of the early church to comprehend the Incarnational event and the Imminence of God. Both approaches promoted a Christian paradigm carefully negotiating a path between two heretical extremes. On one extreme, the ancient Greek ontology viewed the being of the eternal cosmos and the being of the monistic God formed an unbreakable unity so that God was not absolutely free. The other extreme was the Gnostic heresy that maintained an absolute separation between the evil creation and the supreme spiritual God.

Zizioulas makes an interesting observation concerning the paths that the Christian East and West chose. He comments that Christian apologist (Justin Martyr or the Alexandrian catechetical theologians) were all academic theologians responding to these threats to Christianity from the apologetic foundation of “revelation”. Zizioulas sees these academic theologians as never completely avoiding the trap of monism. In contrast, the bishops of this period (Ignatius of Antioch, Irenaeus and Athanasius) were pastoral theologians who sought to understand the *being* of God through the experience of the ‘ecclesial community,’ thus providing them with the perspective of ‘ecclesial being’. This approach by the bishops, argues Zizioulas, revealed that “...the being of God could be known only through personal relationships and personal love. Being means life, and life means *communion*.”<sup>38</sup>

The Christian councils of the first four hundred years of Christian history concentrated on understanding the incarnation of the Son and the divine nature of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The West and East diverged over what constituted the

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<sup>38</sup> Zizioulas, 16.

eternal being of God. The West believed the unity of God was to be found in the divine substance (*ousia*) emphasizing the One in Three, while the East conceived of Trinity in terms of persons starting with the will of the Father that begets the Son and brings forth the Spirit.<sup>39</sup> The free will of the Father, whose very ontological nature is best described by the word ‘love’, generates the free will of the Son and Spirit. Thus for the Greek Fathers, the relationship of Trinity is best described as “Three Persons in One.”<sup>40</sup>

This perspective of Trinity preserves the free will of God and defines the eternal nature of God as a way of being that is summed up in the descriptive word “communion.”<sup>41</sup> Zizioulas argues that Patristic theology of the Trinity finds the ontological principle or cause of the being of God not in the eternal substance (*ousia*) of God but in the person of the Father (*hypostasis*). This understanding guards the personal freedom of God; “the being of God is not an ontological “necessity” or a simple “reality” for God – but we ascribe the being of God to His personal freedom.”<sup>42</sup> The will of the Father is then the cause both of the begetting of the Son<sup>43</sup> and the bringing forth of the Spirit:

The survival of a personal identity is possible for God not on account of His substance but on account of His trinitarian existence. If God the Father is immortal, it is because His unique and unrepeatable identity as Father is distinguished eternally from that of the Son and of the Spirit, who call Him

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<sup>39</sup> This is to be understood not in the sense of a beginning but in terms of that which eternally sustains God.

<sup>40</sup> This argument leads Moltmann to assert that what we know about the Trinity is what Scripture reveals in relational terms and not metaphysical.

<sup>41</sup> Zizioulas, 17.

<sup>42</sup> Zizioulas, 40-41.

<sup>43</sup> It is important to note that Zizioulas sees the term “only-begotten” in the Johannine writings not only pointing to the unique generation of the Son by the Father but also pointing to the unique way in which the Father loves the Son.

“Father.” If the Son is immortal, He owes this primarily not to His substance but to His being the “only-begotten” (note here the concept of uniqueness) and His being the one in whom the Father is “well pleased.” Likewise the Spirit is “life-giving” because He is “communion” (II Cor. 13:14).<sup>44</sup>

The eternal nature of God is directly associated with the internal differentiation of three persons freely and uniquely loving and being loved without losing the oneness of the Godhead. The axiom contributed by Zizioulas as shown in the title of his book, thus becomes “Being is communion”.

To speak of the Father, it is always in discussion with the relationship with the Son and the Spirit. The same applies in a reciprocal fashion when one speaks of the Son or Spirit. To describe one it is always in reference to the relation with the others. To speak of the Father, Son, and Spirit as persons implies the freedom of being ‘Other’ in relation to the other two. True freedom is not independent of the other but free for the other. Freedom becomes identical with love. God is love because he is Trinity. Stanley Grenz succinctly sums up Zizioulas’s theology as to the nature of God’s being in these words:

In Zizioulas estimation, this ontology takes its cue from the Christian conception of God’s three persons in communal unity. Hence, insofar as “God is not first one and then three, but simultaneously One and Three” and because of the “unbreakable *koinonia*” existing among the three persons, otherness is not consequent upon unity but is constitutive and a *sine qua non* condition of unity. Moreover, the absolute difference among the three trinitarian persons suggests that “otherness is absolute.” Furthermore, because we cannot declare “what each person is,” only who He is,” otherness is ontological. And finally, the realization that the terms ‘Father, Son and Spirit are all names indicating relationship’ leads to the conclusion that “otherness is inconceivable apart from relationship.”<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Zizioulas, 48-49.

<sup>45</sup> Stanley J. Grenz, *Rediscovering the Triune God: The Trinity in Contemporary Theology* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 2004), 139.

Zizioulas holds that God's ontological being is not to be found in terms of one divine substance but must be understood relationally in the eternal Person of the Father willing the Trinitarian communion to be so.

Zizioulas' explanation of the Trinity in relation to creation is quite visionary. His view of the economic Trinity is so intertwined and integrated, that we are forced to speak simultaneously of the Three and One. Christ does nothing but the will of the Father. The Spirit is not just an 'aid' to Christ but "actually realizes in history that which we call Christ, this absolutely relational entity, our Savior."<sup>46</sup> Zizioulas delves further into the mystery of the personhood of Jesus Christ. He maintains that with the resurrection and the continuing action of the Holy Spirit, Christ cannot be conceived now in terms of his individuality but only in terms of "his whole personal existence." Meaning, "His whole personal existence" is "His relationship with His body, the Church, ourselves." So that when we refer to Christ we are talking about "a person and not an individual."<sup>47</sup>

Zizioulas sees ministry not as individual efforts but the work of Christ through the Church and "conditioned pneumatologically".<sup>48</sup> If this is the case, then there is no such thing as a 'non-ordained' person, for all Christians are part of the priesthood. Through the Son of God and his creation of the Church in the post resurrection reality, the church manifests to the world the intimate relationship the new humanity can have in communion with God.

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<sup>46</sup> Zizioulas, 111.

<sup>47</sup> Zizioulas, 110 – 111.

<sup>48</sup> Zizioulas, 210.

**Catherine LaCugna “Theology is Inseparable from Soteriology and Vice Versa.”**

Catherine LaCugna opens her book *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life*<sup>49</sup> by stating that: “The doctrine of the Trinity is ultimately a practical doctrine with radical consequences for Christian life.”<sup>50</sup> She argues that knowledge of the Trinity helps us converse clearly about the gospel’s demands; it gives meaning to confession, faith, and baptism into the life of Christ, reveals how personal conversion is related to social responsibilities and transformation, instructs as to what constitutes ‘right relationship’ within the Christian community and society at large, and informs as to how best to praise and worship God.<sup>51</sup>

The first half of the book begins with a historical survey of the progress of Trinitarian thought up to the Twentieth Century that she titles, “The Emergence and Defeat of the Doctrine of the Trinity.” LaCugna observes that the sentiment concerning the doctrine of the Trinity for most Christians in the contemporary church is one of irrelevance. She postulates that this indifference results from seeds planted with the Council of Nicea as a result of the Arian controversy. She argues that the resulting focus on God’s essence, in response to the teaching of Arias, was made at the expense of the God’s self-revelation unveiled through relationship with us. The resulting trajectory of a one-sided theology of God left the contemporary church with a terribly deficient metaphysical Trinitarian belief system irrelevant to everyday faith and practice. The

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<sup>49</sup> Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (New York: HarperCollins, 1991).

<sup>50</sup> LaCugna, *God for Us*, 1.

<sup>51</sup> LaCugna, *God for Us*, 377-379.



emphasis of the early church on Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as they relate in Trinity and with creation yielded to a cursory acknowledgement of the Trinity while stressing the One God – a belief in faith and practice that continues into the twentieth century.

LaCugna, in an article in *The Christian Century* in 1992 comments that: “The Doctrine of the Trinity has the reputation of being an arcane and abstract theory that has no relevance to the practice of Christian faith...” to the point that “Karl Rahner once remarked that even if one could show the doctrine of the Trinity to be false, most religious literature could well remain virtually unchanged.”<sup>52</sup>

LaCugna credits Karl Rahner and Karl Barth for creating a renewed interest in Trinitarian dialogue but then seeks to emphasize the Trinitarian understanding of the Godhead above the insistence on the oneness of God. She agrees with Rahner’s premise that the mystery of God is revealed in the salvation of humanity, but argues that Rahner was “caught in the stranglehold of the post-Nicene problematic...” and constrained by the language formulations of economic Trinity and the immanent Trinity paradigm.<sup>53</sup> LaCugna stresses the need to move beyond the divided dichotomy of economic and immanent Trinity to focus on *oikonomia* as the concrete realization of “the mystery of *theologia* in time, space, history, and personality.” She writes:

The life of God—precisely because God is triune—does not belong to God alone. God who dwells in inaccessible light and eternal glory comes to us in the face of Christ and the activity of the Holy Spirit. Because of God’s outreach to the creature, God is said to be essentially relational, ecstatic, fecund, alive as passionate love.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Catherine Mowry LaCugna, “The Practical Trinity,” *The Christian Century*, July 1992: 678-682.

<sup>53</sup> LaCugna, *God for Us*, 222.

<sup>54</sup> LaCugna, *God for Us*, 223.

The mystery of God is not therefore some indefinable, incomprehensible, transcendent reality that is unrelated to any practical application to the Christian life. LaCugna stresses: "Theology is inseparable from soteriology and vice versa."<sup>55</sup> And this makes it the most practical of Christian teachings in comprehending the fabric of our Christian life together in the reality of our present and future reality together:

Divine life is therefore also *our* life. The heart of the Christian life is to be united with the God of Jesus Christ by means of communion with one another. The doctrine of the Trinity is ultimately therefore a teaching, not about the abstract nature of God, nor about God in isolation from everything other than God, but a teaching about God's life with us and our life with each other. Trinitarian theology could be described as par excellence a theology of relationship, which explores the mysteries of love, relationship, personhood and communion within the framework of God's self-revelation in the person of Christ and the activity of the Spirit. This ongoing revelation and action of God is the proper source for reflection on theological ethics, spirituality, ecclesiology, and the liturgical and communitarian life of the church.<sup>56</sup>

The salvation experience is God's self-revelation through the coming of Christ and the activity of the Holy Spirit that can be best described in the language of relationship. The loving communion and personhood revealed in the Trinity is the very relationship in communion that we, through grace, experience. The Christian community receives this grace of communion and then tethers the ongoing dialogue of spirituality, ecclesiology, ethics, and worship to this anchor. This insight, LaCugna believes, will move the doctrine of the Trinity from a peripheral irrelevancy to Christian faith and practice to center stage, "first as the summary of what we believe about God who saves through Jesus Christ by

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<sup>55</sup> LaCugna, *God for Us*, 211.

<sup>56</sup> LaCugna, *God for Us*, 1. See also page 228.

the power of the Holy Spirit, and second as the proper context for the entire theological enterprise, whether in the areas of ecclesiology, sacraments or Christology.”<sup>57</sup>

LaCugna’s primary thesis proposes that the Trinity enters and works within creation to transform it and bring it into the Godself. The Godself that is revealed in this temporal movement can only be understood in the context of the divine persons in communion with each other. Outside that communion there exists nothing else.

### **David Cunningham “Relationship Without Remainder”**

David Cunningham offers a different perspective from those whom he believes approach the Trinity from a relational theology that diminishes the Immanence of God. He argues against a theology that focuses on relationship at the expense of any concept of the Immanent as the key to understanding the dynamics of the Trinity. His book *These Three are One*, is laid out in three parts. The first section in the book reviews and defends the Christian doctrine of the Trinity as supremely necessary and relevant to Christian faith and practice. In the second section of his book, Cunningham lists three Trinitarian dispositions “that God has by nature, and in which we participate by grace.”<sup>58</sup> Drawing from St. Augustine, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, von Balthazar, and John Milbank, Cunningham offers the language of music, specifically applying the term ‘polyphony’ as a viable conception of the Trinity.<sup>59</sup> He believes that the imagery of music allows for movement,

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<sup>57</sup> LaCugna, “The Practical Trinity”, 678-679.

<sup>58</sup> Cunningham, David S. *These Three Are One: The Practice of Trinitarian Theology*. Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Pub., 1998, 123.

<sup>59</sup> Cunningham, 123.

diversity, and parallel expressions of harmony and dissonance. Music is one endeavor that is not perceived in terms of either one or the other but not both:

Not all enterprises allow this — at least not in the relatively unconstrained way that music does. For example, we would think it odd if someone claimed that a wall was to be built entirely out of bricks and that the same wall was to be built entirely out of wood. We recognize that two wholly different building materials cannot coexist in precisely the same space and time. Music is different: the musical notes *F#* and *A* can easily coexist within the same time and space. And we would not be at all surprised if a pianist played the two notes simultaneously.<sup>60</sup>

Cunningham continues writing referring to the Immanent vs. the Economic Trinity:

A theological perspective informed by *polyphony* would seek to examine, in a critical way, any claim that two categories must necessarily work against one another. Too often, theology has operated with false dichotomies, in which it is assumed that increased attention to one element necessarily decreases the significance of the other. For example, I have already referred to the tendency of some theologians to think of revelation, or of the virtues, as a “zero-sum game” — in which, the more active God is understood to be in the process, the less active human beings can be. Such approaches have been helpfully described by Kathryn Tanner as “contrastive” descriptions of the God-world relationship.<sup>61</sup> One can see such positions at work in, for example, the claim that any increase in emphasis on the humanity of Christ necessarily diminishes the divinity of the incarnate Word, or the argument that God’s transcendence is subverted by any attention to God’s immanence.<sup>61</sup>

Cunningham lauds the attention given to relationality but cautions that in our modern understanding of human persons, relationality is approached first in terms of individuals who choose to be in or out of relationship. He sees this as a limit to using this term to fully describe God who is not three individuals but “wholly constituted by relationality.” Cunningham sees God as “relationship without remainder.” He proposes to

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<sup>60</sup> Cunningham, 128.

<sup>61</sup> Cunningham, 128-129.

interject the term “participation” to describe the “mutually constitutive” relationship in which “all pretensions to wholly autonomous existence are abolished”.<sup>62</sup>

Participation, as Cunningham intends it, means a willingness to allow others to profoundly enter and shape our lives. In describing God in terms of participation, he adds the words “fellowship” and “communion” describing a more comprehensive relationship in which mutually, dependent, active indwelling defies any attempt to individualize the Three.<sup>63</sup>

To this vision of polyphony and participation, Cunningham includes “particularity” which is not something definable in terms of qualities individually achieved, nor personally possessed. In applying this concept to the Trinity, Cunningham asserts “... that the Three are particular in that, they too, are the subjects, objects, and destinations of various forms of communication. The doctrine of the Trinity posits processions and relations in God; thus it also posits particularity in God (identifying a source of the processions, and two processive ‘events’).”<sup>64</sup>

In part three of his book, Cunningham speaks to three particular Christian practices that exemplify Trinitarian virtues. The three he chooses to highlight are peacemaking, pluralizing, and persuading. In the example of peacemaking, Cunningham sees the potential for strife within the particularities in the Trinity even though strife is non-existent. He uses the example of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane questioning the ultimate need for the cross and asking for an alternative course of action. Cunningham

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<sup>62</sup> Cunningham, 165-166.

<sup>63</sup> Cunningham, 166-167.

<sup>64</sup> Cunningham, 207.

describes this event as two wills communicate opposing desires where ultimately the will of Jesus submits his own will to the will of the Father. Mutual love drives abundant deference on one towards the others.<sup>65</sup> He makes a telling point that the church should function as a “school of peace” but it can only do that, “if it tells stories and habituates practices that allow peaceableness to shape our lives” but, says Cunningham, these stories and practices lose their power to shape the Christian life when they are not integrated into the very being of our existence. Alternative stories of self and survival will take over.<sup>66</sup>

The doctrine of the Trinity, according to Cunningham, “provides us with the archetypal account of “pluralizing”: the divine processions mark God’s eternal self-differentiation movements while the indivisibility of God’s external works mark the harmonious convergence of the Three.”<sup>67</sup> In this section, he argues for the need to accept variety in our life together. This he applies to the toleration of styles of worship, types of families, gender, and sexual relations. In that, Cunningham calls Christians to loving reflection concerning the way in which they give deference, accommodate, and seek to understand all members of the body. While Cunningham takes this concept to the extreme, the concept of holy deference is something the church should seek to understand and model.

Cunningham next describes the practice of ‘persuading’. The practical needs of living in a community, as Cunningham views them, are polyphonic, pluralizing, and participatory in the Trinitarian nature of unifying through persuading. The church community by her very nature is continually confronted with decisions concerning form

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<sup>65</sup> Cunningham, 241-243.

<sup>66</sup> Cunningham, 268.

<sup>67</sup> Cunningham, 271.

and practice, given the diversity exhibited within the fellowship. This creates a need to find direction and common ground for the whole. Cunningham lays out some practices from the past that have been used in determining unity:

What form should such interactions take? Should they primarily take the form of rules or laws, which some of the members of the Body compel others to obey? Or should we expect some sort of logical demonstration, in which “the facts” are examined so that all “rational people” can come to agreement? Or should we just sit back and wait for a clear sign as to what God would have us do? Perhaps some combination of the above? <sup>68</sup>

In response to his description of the above practices which he considers contrary to Trinitarian thought, Cunningham provides what he believes is the Trinitarian model of persuasion. He describes the dynamics for persuasion to be “an empathetic, mutual process of listening, speaking and acting” which he argues is the proper understanding of “authority” as it is used in the New Testament. <sup>69</sup>

The New Testament account of Jesus shows that the authority of Jesus clearly did not come from a raw exercise of power to coerce people into following him. The authority of Jesus respects the freedom of all his disciples. He did not enforce compliance but appealed to his followers through persuasive words based on the example and actions of his life. Authority for the church, Cunningham asserts, must mirror the example of Jesus. Authority within the church must be a “...witness to the truth, rendered in the Spirit and met by the working of the Spirit in the hearers. It does not so much impose as commend its message to the free human conscience. It will gain power from, or be frustrated by, the personal example of the authoritative witness.”<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Cunningham, *These Three Are One*, 303-304.

<sup>69</sup> Cunningham, *These Three Are One*, 304.

<sup>70</sup> Cunningham, *These Three Are One*, 313.

Cunningham also has a good deal to say concerning worship of God, which he believes is the center out of which all comprehension of the Christian life proceeds. A Trinitarian understanding of God moves us to awe and worship. Worship takes on a new meaning of participation in the circle of the Trinity as a desire and initiation of the Father through Jesus Christ and the living Spirit. It raises prayer to new heights as it participates in the communion of the Triune God. Prayer becomes praise and moves into practice. This reality of the Trinity provides deeper meaning in the sacramental rites of baptism and communion as both experience and witness to God's presence in the world and the coming eschaton.

God's self-revelation in the work of the Father, Son, and Spirit shows that the Godself's very essence is relational. That God's very essence is love and that love is exhibited in the Godself's passion for creation. God's being is communion and speaks to the work of the Father sending the Son and the Spirit to fully consummate the perfecting of human beings and creation in the eschaton. To experience God is to learn about ourselves. We are persons most fully realized in communion together. We are fully realized when we experience God's love and love him by working with him to accomplish his good will on behalf of humanity and all of Creation.



## CHAPTER 3

### RELATIONAL THEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

The idea of person and personhood is one of the most profound questions addressing the nature of human existence. Trinitarian theological anthropology is the major stream of thought considered in this chapter.

#### **John D. Zizioulas – Persons Defined by Communion**

The brief review of the book, *Being As Communion* by John D. Zizioulas in the previous chapter, centered on the Trinity ontologically understood as communion. The implications of Trinitarian communion reveal to us a theological anthropology (from above) that defines human beings as created in the image of God. But the image is of the Triune God who creates persons intimately connected with the eternal communion of the Trinity and with each other. Because of humanity's creation and relationship with the Trinity, the very essence of humanity must be understood not as autonomous human beings, but considered as persons in relationship. Zizioulas declares that all of the discussions concerning 'personal identity', which is the preoccupation of Western philosophical thinking, find their beginnings in Christian theology.

To show this is the case, Zizioulas examines the history of the concept of being and personhood starting with the Greco-Roman thought. Zizioulas identifies the Greek streams of speculation concerning the person and individuality in the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle. Both philosophies are based on the premise that ultimately all existent things trace their being back to one ontological "monism", articulated in thought by the term 'cosmos'. Succinctly stated, one can observe a multiplicity of existent things

in a temporal moment but ultimately concrete, existent things trace their origin back to the “one” state of being. Therefore every “differentiation” or “accidence” will eventually lose any distinguishing traits and dissolve into the “non-being” harmonious existence of the *cosmos*. According to this view, even God is subject to and restricted by “ontological necessity to the world and the world to him.”<sup>1</sup> In both philosophies, the idea of God creating the cosmos out of nothing is inconceivable since God and the cosmos coexist. Therefore a supreme God who is completely independent and free of the cosmos is inconceivable.

Both Plato and Aristotle viewed the particularities exhibited by human beings as temporary masks since death destroys any distinction. Yet there are differences in how each philosopher approaches the concept of the human being. Plato viewed the person to be of a temporary and transitory nature. The human being as a person in his view was ultimately ontologically unsustainable because the soul, which is united to the body temporarily, will inhabit other bodies and exhibit other temporal qualities in the cycle of being. Therefore no one permanent, unique, identifiable personality should ever be regarded as the essence of a human being. In Plato’s view there is nothing special or unique about humanity. Zizioulas illustrates this view by quoting a line from Plato’s *Laws*, stating that “the world does not exist for the sake of man, but man exists for its sake.” For Plato and his followers, any unique traits for the human being are only a mask

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<sup>1</sup> John D. Zizioulas, *Being As Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1997), 30.

that is temporarily exhibited.<sup>2</sup> There is therefore in Plato's understanding of the nature of humans no eternal consciousness of individual existence.

Aristotle, in contrast, views the 'person' as an impossible concept precisely because the mind is indissolubly united with the physical body. As long as the mind and body are united, the consciousness of a person exists. Once that union is dissolved in death, concrete individuality is lost forever. For both philosophers, human existence was, like everything else, determined by the ontologically derived existence within the cosmos and any uniqueness of 'person' was something temporarily added that would not endure beyond death.<sup>3</sup>

While the debate continues as to what extent Greek thought permeated the ancient Roman view of the nature of *persona*, the Roman world with its concern for organization and social relations, defined the person more in relational terms with others and extended it to define the role of the person as participant in the organized life of the *state*. Personal identity in the Roman world was bound by human relations and ultimately by relation to the state, but like the Greek philosophers, personhood was not an intrinsic quality of the human being.<sup>4</sup>

Both the Greek and Roman civilizations created a rich heritage for Western civilization in the understanding of nature of the human person but also presented a weakness. Personhood, and the freedom and uniqueness that idea entails, was at best a momentary experience because it could not be part of man or woman's true being or

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<sup>2</sup> Zizioulas, 32. Quoting (Plato, *Laws*, X, 903 c-d). Zizioulas ties this into Greek theatre and the entomological connection between the term "person" and the actor's mask.

<sup>3</sup> Zizioulas, 33-35.

<sup>4</sup> Zizioulas, 33-35.

manifest their true essence. Cosmic or state harmony as the ontological nature of existence denied the true being of man from ever being identified with personhood and thwarted any hope of preserving ontological freedom and uniqueness beyond death.

The great revolution in melding the concept of being and person together came from Christianity and its biblical perspective. Zizioulas argues that the contemporary understanding of person comes from the deep roots of Trinitarian theology. He asks the rhetorical question after examining the Greek and Roman understanding of person: “How, then could we have arrived at an identification of the person with the being of man? How could freedom have become identical with the ‘world,’ the identity of the concrete man a product of freedom, and man in his very being identical with the person?”<sup>5</sup> Zizioulas asserts that it was the arrival of Christianity, with its Old Testament Jewish roots, that revealed an eternal creator God that initiated a radical departure from the rest of world cosmology. But Christianity went beyond its Jewish roots with the advent of the incarnation, death, and resurrection of the Only Begotten Son. The incarnation of the Son and the subsequent unfolding revelation of the Trinity forced the Church to formulate a scripturally faithful “ontological view of man which would unite the person with the being of man, with his permanent and enduring existence, with his genuine and absolute identity.”<sup>6</sup>

The profound reality concerning the nature of Trinity is the basis for a theological anthropology of the person. Through the Father sending his Son to identify with creation through the incarnation, creation is given the hope of an eternal existence that preserves the uniqueness of personhood and provides the basis for an eternal ontology for the

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<sup>5</sup> Zizioulas, 35.

<sup>6</sup> Zizioulas, 35.

person. Inside the communion of love that is forged – through the work of the Father, Son, and Spirit – with men and women, death of personhood is no longer a fear. The life of the person, in relation to the Son, is bound up in loving and being loved by God as a unique and unrepeatable person. Thus, just as the eternal nature of the Trinity is generated and sustained by the love of the Father, Son, and Spirit, so too, through the unique relationship the person can have with the Father through Christ in the Spirit, the survival and freedom of the person is sustained and loved eternally.

Zizioulas observes that the significance of Christ is not just as the bearer of a beautiful message from God but through his incarnation, death, and resurrection, he makes eternal life for man a historical reality: “He realizes in history the *very reality of the person* and makes it the basis and ‘hypostasis’ of the person for every man.”<sup>7</sup> For the person to be eternal it is necessary to have an ontological mode of existence, other than that of creation, to ensure eternal life. It must be a mode of existence that is “precisely the manner in which God also subsists as being.”<sup>8</sup> Baptism, Zizioulas asserts, is precisely where the change of ‘hypostasis’ takes place. In baptism, the person identifies with the resurrected Lord as the new creation born not of flesh but “from above” (John 3:3,7).<sup>9</sup> Through this new birth (providing an ontological shift of identity), the person transcends his/her biological reality by being added to the Church (Acts 2: 38-41).

By being added to the Church through the new birth (which comprises a new ‘hypostatic constitution’), the person becomes an “authentic person” without falling into

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<sup>7</sup> Zizioulas, 54.

<sup>8</sup> Zizioulas, 55.

<sup>9</sup> Zizioulas, 54.

individuality.<sup>10</sup> Christ becomes the firstborn of all creation, thereby uniting the created with the eternal relationship of God. For Zizioulas: “the Church is not simply an institution; she is a ‘mode of existence’ and ‘a way of being.’”<sup>11</sup> But, Zizioulas insists, we cannot talk about the Church without understanding the activity of the Spirit. It is not just that the Spirit guides the Church or “animates” a church. The presence of the Spirit does not refer to the well-being of the Church, but “makes the Church be.” Zizioulas contends that “pneumatology is an ontological category in ecclesiology.”<sup>12</sup>

The Church correspondingly, through communion with God, transcends any relationships based on biological necessities. The Christian through baptism leaves the constraints of the laws of nature (individualism and death) and becomes a free person whose personhood is ultimately relationally defined in the Church (community), which is understood both as Christ in the world and Christ in Trinity.<sup>13</sup> The church becomes free to live and love outside the boundaries dictated by the needs of natural survival because existence and being are sustained within the body of Christ. Relationship, in community, transcends every biological or social category of exclusiveness. This in turn creates a paradox; Christians exist in a tension of the yet but not yet. The Church has her being

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<sup>10</sup> Being a person is fundamentally different from being an individual or a personality. True personhood is derived from loving and being loved. Identity, although unique, is valued and understood in terms of relationship. Particularity of an individual is in the “modern” sense connected to the “self.” Personality is seen as the intrinsic possessions of its particular qualities and experiences. When created humans declare themselves to be equal to God (the Fall) it makes man/woman to be “the ultimate point of reference in existence. This makes human existence unsustainable. Zizioulas argues that “the truth of being” (created or natural) acquires priority over “the truth of communion.” The natural for created existence is to have a beginning and an end which without the communion of God leads to death. The natural man is destined to live within the limits of creation. Relationality with the eternal God means community with Trinity and eternal existence as persons.

<sup>11</sup> Zizioulas, 15.

<sup>12</sup> Zizioulas, 131-132.

<sup>13</sup> Zizioulas, 56-59.

described by Zizioulas as a “*sacramental or eucharistic hypostasis*” that creates a “*paradoxical hypostasis*” with roots in the future and branches extending back into the present.<sup>14</sup> Zizioulas expresses something astounding to Protestant ears: “Eucharist is not only the memory of a historical fact ... but an accomplished eschatological act and tastes the very life of the Holy Trinity.”<sup>15</sup>

The eschatological nature, tied up in the Eucharistic hypostasis, informs Christians that their identity is not confined only to this world and frees them from the tragic outcomes of the natural processes. The implications of which argue against the obsession of Christians investing their lives in the goods and values of this world. For this reason, Zizioulas argues that the warning of Jesus (Luke 6:24) and of Paul (1 Timothy 6:10) about the dependency upon physical wealth must be taken seriously precisely because this obsession indicates ontological roots founded firmly as the creature rather than an ontological identification with the Creator.

The challenge to live as persons within the Christian community as opposed to perceiving life in our individuality provides a clear and timely prophetic call within the church, as well to society as a whole. The Eucharistic concept of truth changes the Christian’s perception of freedom. We usually perceive freedom as the right to make choices; between affirming and negating, embracing or excluding, and good and evil. These choices says Zizioulas, are directly linked with the individuality of humans and the

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<sup>14</sup> Zizioulas, 59.

<sup>15</sup> Zizioulas, 21.

dichotomy within being, "which are born out of man's insistence on referring all of being ultimately to himself."<sup>16</sup>

When Christians are born into the body of Christ, the point of reference is moved by the Spirit from the individual to communion as the Church in the Trinity. And when the people of God participate in the Eucharist, it is God's affirmation of freedom for his people: "... it is not the "yes" and the "no" together which God offers in Christ, but only the "yes" which equates to the Eucharistic "Amen" (II Cor. 1:19-20)."<sup>17</sup> Through this transformation, a new concept of freedom is birthed, "determined not by choice, but by the movement of a constant affirmation, a continual 'Amen.'"<sup>18</sup> Zizioulas writes:

Man is free only within communion. If the Church wishes to be the place of freedom, she must continually place all the "objects" she possesses, whatever they may be (Scripture, sacraments, ministries, etc.) within the communion event to make them "true" and to make her members free in regard to the mass objects, as well in them and through them as channels of communion. Christians must learn not to lean on objective "truths" as securities for truth, but to live in an *Epicletic* way, i.e. leaning on the communion event in which the structure of the Church involves them. Truth liberates by placing beings in communion.<sup>19</sup>

The church is presented with the task to participate in the transformation of nature. The Eucharistic nature of the Church and priesthood is linked to the world of nature beyond salvation for humanity. If the work of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit is to unite all things into the Godself so that God may be all in all, then "the Eucharistic or priestly function of man reconnects created nature to infinite existence, and thus liberates

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<sup>16</sup> Zizioulas, 102.

<sup>17</sup> Zizioulas, 120.

<sup>18</sup> Zizioulas, 121.

<sup>19</sup> Zizioulas, 122.



it from slavery to necessity by letting it develop its potentialities to the maximum.”<sup>20</sup> The Eucharistic concept of truth can thus liberate man from the lust to dominate nature, making Christians aware that the Christ-truth exists for the life of the whole cosmos, and that the deification which Christ brings (i.e. the communion with the divine life 2 Peter 1:4) extends to “all creation” and not just humanity.<sup>21</sup>

### **Jurgen Moltmann – The Human Expression of the “Axiom of God’s Passion”**

Moltmann’s vision of the relational Trinity explored in chapter two drives his vision for a relational humanity. The eternal relationship of the Trinity through the actions of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit becomes open to men and women and to the world. Moltmann envisions a renewal of a vibrant faith lived out in the love and life of the church faithfully bearing witness to the presence of the Trinity with all of creation.

Moltmann’s perspective on the social Trinity directs our understanding of men and women to be defined in terms of relationships and communities. The creation narratives of Genesis reveal that any understanding of being human begins with relational intimacy derived from a loving creator. God’s primordial intention in creating men and women is in the context of relations and community. The creation narrative relationally ties man and woman to God, to each other in the structure of family, to our neighbor as well as a world community, and to the whole of creation. Moltmann envisions an eschatological trajectory where humanity and all of creation are in movement towards an ultimate “panentheistic” union with Trinity.<sup>22</sup> As discussed in chapter two, the “axiom of

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<sup>20</sup> Zizioulas, 119.

<sup>21</sup> Zizioulas, 120.

<sup>22</sup> Jurgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom*. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 19-20.

God's passion" involves the work and suffering motivated by the love of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit so that humanity and creation might fully be perfected.

This turn to perfecting a new humanity is revealed in the Father's sending of the Son incarnationally into the world. The Son becomes the fully realized *imago Dei* through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. This work of the Father, in the Son and through the Spirit, connects men and women relationally with the eternal fellowship of the Trinity. Human beings through the blood of Christ are no longer alone and isolated individuals. The natural limitations of ontological origin as physical creatures and aloneness resulting from sin and rebellion are superseded through the connection to the cross and the resurrection. This reversal of individualism, isolation, and death realized through Christ becomes the work of the Holy Spirit in restoring and creating relational wholeness and harmony both to humanity and to creation. Restoration and salvation becomes that which was started at the resurrection that Christians partially experience now, yet will only be fully realized in the eschaton when Christ surrenders the kingdom to the Father (Ephesians 1:4-10, 1 Corinthians 15:24).

The work of the Triune God leads to oneness of community but does not destroy the uniqueness of identity. The communion of the Church with the Triune God preserves the 'otherness' of persons in their uniqueness. Becoming a person in the kingdom of God brings them into eternal communion and preserves their identity and uniqueness without isolation or separateness. Loving and being loved in the context of 'sonship' and 'friendship' define the human being relationally in communion with the Father, Brother, and Spirit.

Freedom then for the body of Christ means freedom to do the good, freedom to respect persons, freedom to embrace others in friendship, openness, kindness, and patience. Freedom to love as the Father loves. Moltmann refers to the creative love of God as “passion”.<sup>23</sup> “The word ‘passion’, in the double sense in which we use it, is well suited to express the central truth of the Christian faith. Christian faith lives from the suffering of a great passion and is itself the passion for life which is prepared for suffering.”<sup>24</sup> This means that as the church actively participates in the fellowship of God, and the church opens herself to the world because God is open to the world. The Church becomes the testimony to the economic presence of Trinity. She is not afraid of embracing and participating in the creative love of God that lives in humiliation, forgiveness, long-suffering, and compassion because that is the Church’s continuing reality in God. In the sacrifice of creative love, the Church knows she is an active witness to the unity of God and faithfully testifies both the presence of God in her and in the future glorification of the Church, creation, and of God.

The way for Moltmann to describe the nature of the relational Trinity is illuminated in the formulation used in John 17 that speaks of each of the Trinity being eternally in “each of the others.” Moltmann defines the relationship within the Triune God as that of *perichoresis* meaning that the Father, Son, and Spirit are eternal community, always dynamically responding in unending reciprocity of love.<sup>25</sup> This growth in the understanding of God as Three, once again calls for Christians to re-read

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<sup>23</sup> Moltmann, 22-24.

<sup>24</sup> Moltmann, 24.

<sup>25</sup> Moltmann, 157.

the Bible in order to see with new eyes the unveiling of the Trinity. Moltmann argues that the scriptures are “the testimony to the history of the Trinity’s relations of fellowship, which are open to men and women, and open to the world.”<sup>26</sup> Reading scripture from this Trinitarian hermeneutic illuminates the way for a Christian concept of living in community, given totally over to the passionate missional life of God, living for God, for each other and for the world.

Moltmann’s Relational Trinitarian Theology is significant in that it reverses the trend of the modern era where protestant Christians viewed themselves as on their own and in a sense orphans. God was there but off in the distance watching and waiting to see what believers would do. The idea of mission was a command to be obeyed and evangelism was under the responsibility and initiative of the Church. The sooner it was finished, the sooner God would come back. Pious individuals would receive the call to go while the church supported their excursions. In contrast, Moltmann’s vision for the person is tied up with the church as “persons in communion.” Men and women are not isolated individuals whose identity is tied up in the “self.” Their identity is tied up in the church whose being and becoming is tied into continuing community with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Church has never been left on its own as an orphan but continues to be a manifestation of the mission of God consummating what will be the world’s ultimate future. It is a life of love participating in ways that image the Trinity. Stanley Grenz rightfully argues that Moltmann’s contribution to the doctrine of the

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<sup>26</sup> Moltmann, 19.

Trinity provides "... a 'critical principle' for theology in its mission of transforming the world."<sup>27</sup>

### **Stanley Grenz – "The Social God and the Relational Self"**

Stanley Grenz in his book *The Social God and the Relational Self*<sup>28</sup> provides an in-depth investigation of the imago Dei doctrine and creatively extends Trinitarian implications into the field of theological anthropology. Grenz traces the revival of Trinitarian theology from Hegel's focus on developing a philosophical approach to the doctrine of the Trinity. He recognizes Barth's and Rahner's methodological contributions along with the significant contributions of Moltmann's and Pannenberg's shift from the oneness of God to the divine Trinitarian activity revealed in history. Grenz then builds on the work of Zizioulas and LaCugna's contributions to Trinity as communion to construct his case for a Trinitarian shaped anthropology. Grenz holds that, with the ascendancy of the theme of "divine sociality" of the three Trinitarian persons, the door is now open for "... a truly theological anthropology – that is, an understanding of what it means to be human in whom the triune life becomes the touchstone for speaking about human personhood."<sup>29</sup>

Having insisted on the need for a theological anthropology whose origins flow from the theology of Social Trinity, Grenz recounts the 1,500 year trajectory from Augustine to Maslow that shaped the 'modern' view of self and its subsequent postmodern demise. The pilgrimage from Augustine to Maslow resulted in a concept of

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<sup>27</sup> Stanley J. Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self: A Trinitarian Theology of the Imago Dei* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 45.

<sup>28</sup> Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self*.

<sup>29</sup> Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self*, 57.

the human being as a self-possessed, autonomous, and centered self that filled the modern era human psyche with a strong self-sufficiency proving that the individual ego had what it takes to thrive. Grenz starts with Augustine's notion of the individual's journey towards God that leads to a pietistic self-improvement or self-mastery as the development of the individual's Christian virtues "aided by divine grace."<sup>30</sup> He then follows the development of the philosophy of the individual self to the modern era where the self has been reinterpreted and secularized into self-mastery characterized by the quest of the autonomous self. The goal, of course, had changed from finding God to the self's attaining psychological harmony and inner peace through the graces of the psychotherapist.<sup>31</sup> Augustine's emphasis on the individual inward journey towards God with an emphasis on "introspection and self-reflection"<sup>32</sup> planted the seeds for the idea of personhood to be viewed as inside the self and left the "social, communal, toward-another character of personhood rather difficult to see."<sup>33</sup> Even before the turn of the twentieth century, this upward progression of the self-made and self-defined individual began to diminish as a viable working anthropological model. Throughout the twentieth century, the concept of the individualistic human self found its greatest opponent not to be Christianity but in the vocal critiques of what has been termed the postmodern movement.

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<sup>30</sup> Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self*, 96.

<sup>31</sup> Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self*, 96.

<sup>32</sup> Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self*, 63.

<sup>33</sup> Catherine Mowry LaCunga, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (New York: HarperCollins, 1991), 247; quoted in Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self*, 63.

Tracing postmodern thought from Montaigne through Foucault, Grenz elaborates the resulting postmodern reaction and rejection of the ‘modern’ self with its self-assured optimistic confidence in the advancement and conquest of the independent self. Nietzsche asserted that in modernism, Western civilization moved away from a belief in God that connected the self to the Christian story which he referred to as “the death of God.” The only thing left at the end of the day was the instincts of self-preservation and self-transcendence through one’s own exertion of creative power.<sup>34</sup>

Grenz highlights Nietzsche’s disciple Foucault who argues that it is not just God who has died in modern society; there is also the “death of Man –that is the death of self – as well.”<sup>35</sup> Modern human sciences have composed a fiction that in man’s understanding of history, the objective mind can “encounter a universal understanding of the human person.”<sup>36</sup> Foucault argues that all sciences are fabrications that are socially constructed. There is no such thing as universal knowledge, and that is especially true of the concept of ‘human nature.’ Whatever perception of the world and ourselves that we have are local constructs, socially fabricated.<sup>37</sup>

Postmodern perceptions of the self are seen to be socially conceived and therefore interdependent. The self is thought to be highly unstable and impermanent, defined by fluctuating social relationships and momentary preferences. Grenz believes this “state of mind” opens the conversation about a concept of the person birthed in Trinitarian Theology the *imago Dei*. At the conclusion of the first section of his book, Grenz writes:

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<sup>34</sup> Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self*, 130-132.

<sup>35</sup> Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self*, 132.

<sup>36</sup> Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self*, 132.

<sup>37</sup> Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self*, 132.

The spiritual chaos endemic to the postmodern condition may lead to the celebration of the death of the self. But it may also occasion a new quest for some semblance of meaning in the face of the terrifying emptiness introduced by, or the search for some measure of stability in the midst of the vertigo endemic to, the postmodern condition.<sup>38</sup>

In the second half of his book, Grenz offers a social Trinitarian theology as the true path of discovery into what it means to be relational human beings imaging the Triune God. Stanley Grenz postulates that theological anthropology:

... engages in the quest to speak about humankind by viewing the human reality from the perspective of an understanding of God. By following this path, a theological anthropology influenced by the contemporary rebirth of Trinitarian theology describes the relational self not merely as person-in-relationship but as the ecclesial self, the new humanity in communion with the triune God.<sup>39</sup>

Grenz takes his theological anthropology from above and from below. In the creation narrative, he sees the sexual relationship and the forming of family in the context of love of the other, between Adam and Eve from the aspect of anthropology as persons in community under covenant relationship as one implication of the *imago Dei*. From there, in chapter eight, he extends this to the 'new creation' which supersedes the limits of the earthly family. The Church in Christ, and through the Spirit, places the new humanity in the context of being loved and loving not from the perspective of the natural man and woman, but from the *perichoretic* participation of divine love.<sup>40</sup> The attendant ontology of personhood suggests that the Creator's intent that humans be the representation of the divine reality means that the goal of human existence is to be

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<sup>38</sup> Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self*, 136-137.

<sup>39</sup> Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self*, 312.

<sup>40</sup> Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self*, 44. The reciprocal intimate indwelling or interpenetration the three persons of the Trinity.



persons-in-relationship; that is, their personal identities emerge out of their reciprocal relations.

The church through the Spirit ‘images’ the divine life revealed in the life of Jesus. The church according to Grenz forms a “corporate” personality “that shares a common identity, a solidarity, that fosters the new sense of personhood enjoyed by each participant in the ecclesial community.”<sup>41</sup>

The ecclesial self, born thorough the Christ narrative embedded in Trinity, gives new shape to one’s sense of personal identity and pulls both the participating individual and the church into a new eschatological future. The church that images the divine relationship, as Grenz summarizes, is “one, holy, catholic, and apostolic in that it engages in a mission that is proclaiming, reconciling, sanctifying and unifying.”<sup>42</sup>

This brings to light a social or communal understanding of imago Dei and in turn drives the role of the church in her participation in the missio Dei. This concept is presented as a counter image to the modern view of the imago Dei manifest as the human person as a particular individual. One of the great tragedies of the modern era is the elevation of ‘personal identity’ to the extent that moderns view themselves as autonomous moral beings guided by an existential humanistic philosophy. This means that the idea of person and ‘personal identity’ is held up as the supreme ideal.

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<sup>41</sup> Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self*, 331-332.

<sup>42</sup> Stanley J. Grenz, *Renewing the Center: Evangelical Theology in a Post-Theological Era* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000), 321.

## LaCugna – The Communion of Divine and Human Personhood

Catherine LaCugna's insights concerning the social Trinity focuses on the reality that the continuing work of the Trinity is to make the communion of divine life *our* life. The transforming union of Church with the Godhead through the continuing work of reconciliation wrought by Christ and the Holy Spirit is a movement of the Church into a deeper communion with and for each other and all of creation. To address this idea of the divine life becoming our life, LaCugna provides an informative survey on the contemporary thinking of the meaning of personhood<sup>43</sup> and then moves to the application of this meaning for Christians today in the following declaration:

If there is a real correspondence between *theologia* and *oikonomia*, if these are two aspects of one mystery of communion, then Christian ethicists as well as theologians speculating on the meaning of divine and human personhood must deliberate on the social order. To do any less undermines the point of a trinitarian doctrine of God.”<sup>44</sup>

Drawing from her selective review of the subject of personhood in contemporary theological thinking, LaCugna sees God not as a ‘by-itself’ or ‘it-itself’ in all eternity but the triune God who “is self-communicating, existing from all eternity in relation to another” whose ultimate ground of being is persons existing in communion: “God is ecstatic, fecund, self-emptying out of love for another, a personal God who comes to self through another.”<sup>45</sup> God’s personhood is self-revealing from the economy that spans creation to the eschaton opening “...the life of communion among persons, divine and

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<sup>43</sup> Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (New York: HarperCollins, 1991), 243-288.

<sup>44</sup> LaCugna, *God for Us*, 288.

<sup>45</sup> LaCugna, *God for Us*, 14-15.

human, and among all creatures.”<sup>46</sup> In this paradigm, Trinitarian thought is more than an interesting chapter in text books on theology. Trinitarian communion implies that the Church and each person that is corporally part of her as fully participating in the life of God through the union with Jesus and the Holy Spirit. We see ourselves as persons living in grace of Trinitarian communion as full participants engaged in the managing of the household of creation and in living the fullness of the reign of God through the leading of the Holy Spirit.

The implications for the church are relationally profound and we find those implications revealed in God’s life in Jesus Christ: “Jesus preached the reign of God (*basileia*), he revealed the order of a new household (*oikos*), a new dwelling place where the Samaritan woman, the tax collector, and the leper are equally at home.”<sup>47</sup> The open Trinity becomes the open church where God’s life is lived out in full view of creation. The Church becomes the dwelling place both of the Father and the Beloved through the life of the Spirit. Therefore the emphasis is placed less on God’s dwelling in the ‘person’ (which he does) and more on the Godhead’s dwelling in the community of persons that is the Church. The inherent reality of God and humans living together in communion as one creates a doctrine of the Trinity that is urgently practical. LaCugna rightly believes that this vision of church in communion with God is greatly

... underutilized... for articulating what we understand to be the demands of the gospel, what constitutes right relationship, what serves the glory of God, what it means to confess faith in and be baptized into the name and life of the God of Jesus Christ. Both theology and praxis would be quite different if the doctrine of the Trinity were allowed to serve at the center of Christian faith.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> LaCugna, *God for Us*, 346.

<sup>47</sup> LaCugna, *God for Us*, 378.

<sup>48</sup> LaCugna, *God for Us*, 378-379.

### **Leonardo Boff – Trinitarian Implications on Society and the Church**

Leonardo Boff, in his struggle against society's inequalities and oppressions, examines the doctrine of the Trinity through the eyes of Liberation theology. His book *Trinity and Society* explores the social nature of the Trinity and its implications for transforming society.<sup>49</sup> Boff concurs with Moltmann that the strong focus in the West on the one God to the point of sacrificing a deep Trinitarian understanding has harmed the church and society as a whole. He believes the imagery of a monarchical hierarchy in the universal realm as particularly problematic for societal relations as a whole because it provided theological justification for oppressive and exploitive totalitarian societal structures. Boff sees the reaffirmation of a Trinitarian paradigm emphasizing a relationally open and loving communion as the church's imperative. He believes that Trinitarian thinking challenges the church and society to identify and dismantle the distorted oppressive images of God that support society's dysfunction and argues for a social re-imagining that envisions models that more reflect the perfect Trinitarian example of community. Boff argues that for the poor, oppressed, and the marginalized in today's society, the Trinity gives the promise of hope, justice, and social belonging.

God's self-revelation of Trinity is the foundation for the human desire of equality and sharing – to respectfully know and be known in communion both with others and with God. A Trinitarian theology provides the model for human flourishing within a new and transformative societal structure. Boff sees the emphasis of the divine Three over the oneness as the divine source of realizing the human desire for personhood. Each member

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<sup>49</sup> Leonardo Boff, *Trinity and Society*, trans. Paul Burns (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1988).

of the Trinity lovingly shares fully in the other two. The Three are equal in eternity, glory, and dignity that can best be described as one egalitarian reality. The Three are equal in the giving of love and life yet uniquely distinct in personhood. This distinction enables communion and mutual, sacrificial deference from one towards the other. Each one gives to the other and to creation that which is distinctly the Father, the Son, and the Spirit's gifts to give, thereby forming the overflow of divine community. The practicality of this vision resides in the community of the Three and becomes "the pointer toward social life and its archetype" for the transformation of the human community.<sup>50</sup> Boff gives this terse quotable summation of what he believes *is* the agenda for Liberation theology: "The holy Trinity is our social program."<sup>51</sup>

Building on Moltmann's emphasis of perichoresis to describe the relationship within the Trinity, Boff is representative of many current scholars who postulate that human society, even in its broken relational nature, retains hints of the divine society of the Trinity. He argues that the Trinity serves as the perfect model for any society that seeks to respect the multiplicity of individuals and actions while at the same time encouraging synergetic integrated unity.<sup>52</sup> In short, the divine society of the Trinity provides the structure for all Christian communities and interactions: governments, church, family relations, and racial identity all need to emulate relational perichoresis. Boff visualizes the following:

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<sup>50</sup> Boff, *Trinity and Society*, 119.

<sup>51</sup> Leonardo Boff, "The Liberating Design of God: Trinity," in *Mysterium Liberationis*, eds. Ignacio Ellacuria and Jon Sobrino, 389-404 (Maryknoll: CollinsDove, 1993), 392. Here Boff refers to a motto used first by the nineteenth-century Russian Orthodox intellectual Vladimir Zielinski .

<sup>52</sup> Boff, *Trinity and Society*, 118-120.

Society is not ultimately set in its unjust and unequal relationships, but summoned to transform itself in the light of the open and egalitarian relationships that obtain in the communion of the Trinity, the goal of social and historical progress. If the Trinity is good news, then it is so particularly for the oppressed and those condemned to solitude.”<sup>53</sup>

Boff argues that life imaged in community with Trinity will produce a transformed society. God is not the solitary figure dictating his will from above, but rather, the Trinity found in the mystery of relationships among mutually serving and fulfilling co-equals best described in terms of “communion” together. If God is perceived to reveal the Godself in this way, then identifying and changing or rejecting the oppressive relationships (structures) in society becomes feasible and possesses theological empowerment from the nature of the Godself.<sup>54</sup>

As a practical example advocating for theologically shaped discussion of human society, Boff examines the two dominant social systems in conflict today: capitalism and socialism. In Boff’s estimation, capitalism glorifies the individual whose value is seen through his or her personal performance, disconnected from ties to others and society. In capitalism goods are seen as commodities to be possessed and owned privately to the exclusion of the benefit for the vast majority. At the other extreme, socialism holds to the ideal of communal sharing of all that is valued; however, the personhood of the individual is ignored and suppressed supposedly for the benefit of the masses. Of course the justification for the violation of personhood is determined by a select few controlling elite dictating to the masses below.

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<sup>53</sup> Boff, *Trinity and Society*, 158.

<sup>54</sup> Boff, *Trinity and Society*, 148-154.

Boff argues that both the capitalistic and socialistic models are terribly flawed and are in need of revision in light of the model of Trinitarian communion. The way forward for Boff is found in the Trinitarian mystery of communion that creates for humanity new social forms – forms that value all relations, be they between persons or in institutions. The contribution of all is treated in an egalitarian way that witnesses to kinship and promotes respect for differences: “the society that takes its inspiration from Trinitarian communion cannot tolerate class differences, domination based on power (economic, sexual or ideological) that subjects those who are different to those who exercise that power and marginalizes the former from the latter.”<sup>55</sup>

Drawing from the community of the Trinity for his paradigm for the church, Boff visualizes the church as “... more communion than hierarchy, more service than power, more circular than pyramidal, more loving embrace than bending the knee before authority.”<sup>56</sup>

This, in turn, provides Boff with the grounds for transforming society. He believes that the church should be the voice of inclusion where the poor and oppressed can find solitude and begin working in the world for authentic liberation found only in God.<sup>57</sup>

### **David Cunningham: Polyphony, Participation, and Particularity**

David Cunningham’s use of the descriptive terms polyphony, participation, and particularity describing the Trinitarian relationship elaborated in chapter two are equally

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<sup>55</sup> Boff, *Trinity and Society*, 151.

<sup>56</sup> Boff, *Trinity and Society*, 154.

<sup>57</sup> Boff, *Trinity and Society*, 154.

useful as a model for the church community. Cunningham believes that this understanding of relationship provides profound insight to the Christian's life in relation to the Trinity. Individualism is the bane of our modern culture that poses considerable challenges to the Christian faith. Cunningham contrasts the individual humanistic ideals of Western culture with the communal participation in the Trinity as the theological model for anthropology. He sees the modern person defined by Western society as an autonomous individual completely distinct from the 'other' who perceives life solely based on the needs and the desires of the self. The limits of relationship are determined by the needs and desires of the 'subjective self.' Cunningham reflects that this relational model permeates the whole of Western civilization including the church:

The notion of the self as subjective consciousness displaced the centrality of mutual participation, both in the doctrine of God and in the Christian understanding of human community. The outcome is visible all around us; in its glorification of the isolated individual, our culture is profoundly antitrinitarian. At every level, through practically every system and structure, we are discouraged from allowing our lives to become too tightly intertwined with those of others.<sup>58</sup>

Cunningham believes the use of the musical concept of polyphony as a metaphor for envisioning the eternal relations within Trinity, also provides a transformative vision for the church's relation with and for each other. Correlating this Trinitarian quality as a trait of persons participating in the Christian community frees the church to explore the diversity of missional life with mutual respect for God shaped difference. Cunningham believes this understanding should change the way we see ourselves and others. Christian particularity as persons is so shaped through utter dependence on God and others (past, present, and future) that particularity calls the Christian to live in "harmonious consensus

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<sup>58</sup> David S. Cunningham, *These Three Are One: The Practice of Trinitarian Theology* (Malden, Mas.: Blackwell Publishing, 1998), 171.



and mutual participation” even as the unique giftedness of individual persons in communion is also celebrated as the masterwork of the Creator.<sup>59</sup> Gifted participation in the church community accents the virtue of the concept of polyphony where multiple threads of music that are particular, yet played together, create a synergy together that completes the masterpiece.

### **Stephen Seamands – Trinitarian Based Christian Service**

Stephen Seamands, a professor of Christian doctrine at Asbury Theological Seminary, addresses pastors concerning the shape of Christian service from a Trinitarian perspective in his book, *Ministry in the Image of God*.<sup>60</sup> Seamands identifies a chasm between the theological discussion of the Trinity by many Theologians and the fundamental shaping that a Trinitarian foundation provides for church ministry. He sees the doctrine of the Trinity as the grammar of the Christian faith that enables Christians to articulate clearly a doctrine of God and discover the richness and depth of life in Trinity. But that is not all Trinitarian grammar provides, for “the primary purpose of the Trinitarian grammar is not comprehension nor communication, but communion with God.”<sup>61</sup> To illustrate his point, Seamands describes Christian ministry from the Trinitarian perspective: “The ministry we have entered is the ministry of Jesus Christ, the Son, to the Father, through the Holy Spirit, for the sake of the church and the world.”<sup>62</sup> In

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<sup>59</sup> Cunningham, 234. This call to life is the extreme opposite of the ideals of much of modern culture that defines person as individualistic, contrastive, and exclusionary.

<sup>60</sup> Stephen Seamands, *Ministry in the Image of God: The Trinitarian Shape of Christian Service* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 19.

<sup>61</sup> Seamands, 12.

<sup>62</sup> Seamands, 19.

other words, authentic ministry is not work that ministers do for God, but an open participation in the divine nature; “ministry is not so much asking Christ to join us in our ministry, as we offer him to others; ministry is participating with Christ in his ongoing ministry as he offers himself to others through us.”<sup>63</sup>

Seamands does not stop at defining ministry with what Jesus does in us. He proposes that the Father has a lot to show ministers concerning the work that he is doing. Through this work of the Father, ministers can identify with Jesus by learning to do only what the Father is doing and striving to do nothing on our own. Seamands cautions that this is not some over-spiritualized or mystified process (although in a few instances it may be mystified). Usually what God is doing is found “in the context of the circumstances and events unfolding around us.”<sup>64</sup>

Looking to see what the Father is doing in the world leads to the indispensable role of the Spirit as our guide in understanding the Father’s will. Seamands illustrates the role of the Spirit in the life of Jesus and the potential this offers for all authentic Christian ministries by quoting a section out of a recent ecumenical document concerning the Spirit:

Through love, the Holy Spirit orients the whole life of Jesus towards the Father in the fulfillment of his will. The Father sends his Son (Gal 4:4) when Mary conceives him through the operation of the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35). The Holy Spirit makes Jesus manifest as Son of the Father by resting upon him at baptism (Luke 3:21-22; John 1:33). He drives Jesus into the wilderness (see Mark 1:12). Jesus returns “full of the Holy Spirit” (Luke 4:1). Then he begins his ministry “in the power of the Spirit” (Luke 4:14). He is filled with joy in the Spirit, blessing the Father for his gracious will (Luke 10:21). He chooses his apostles “through the Holy Spirit” (Acts 1:2). He casts out demons by the Spirit of God (Matt 12:28). He offers himself to the Father “through the eternal Spirit” (Heb 9:14). On

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<sup>63</sup> Seamands, 20.

<sup>64</sup> Seamands, 26.

the Cross he “commits his Spirit” into the Father’s hands (Luke 23:46). “In the Spirit” he descended to the dead (1 Pet 3:19), and by the Spirit he was raised from the dead (Rom 8:11) and “designated Son of God in power” (Rom 1:4).<sup>65</sup>

After investigating a Trinitarian vision for ministry, Seamands proceeds to describe seven characteristics of Trinitarian shaped ministry that provide the subjects for the rest of his book: 1. Relational Personhood: The Nature of Trinitarian Ministry, 2. Joyful Intimacy: The foundation of Trinitarian Ministry, 3. Glad Surrender: the Heart of Trinitarian Ministry, 4. Complex Simplicity: the Mystery of the Trinitarian Ministry, 5. Gracious Self-Acceptance: The Particularity of Trinitarian Ministry, 6. Mutual Indwelling: The Reciprocity of Trinitarian Ministry, 7. Passionate Mission: The Impulse of Trinitarian Ministry.<sup>66</sup>

In ‘Relational Personhood’, it is Seamands’s conviction (drawing from Scripture, and theologians like Karl Barth, Emil Brunner, and Dietrich Bonhoeffer) that a Trinitarian understanding of personhood is the key to unlocking the meaning of the image of God found in Genesis 1:26. This understanding of relational personhood is in direct opposition with Western culture’s ideal for personhood noted for its individualism that elevates the ego and differentiates self from others. In this process, freedom becomes defined as free from the influence and obligations towards others in order to pursue one’s own will. Seamands argues freedom for humanity is to be understood in the free nature found in the Trinity. This freedom is understood as “freedom for others, in which

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<sup>65</sup> “The Greek and Latin Traditions Regarding the Procession of the Holy Spirit,” *Information Service of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity*, Vatican City: 1989, 91-92. Quoted in Raniero Cantalamessa, *Come, Creator Spirit*, trans. Denis Barrett and Marlene Barrett (Collegeville, Minn.: Leturgical Press, 2003): 375-376. Quoted in Seamands, 27.

<sup>66</sup> Seamands, 18-19.

paradoxically, the uniqueness and distinctiveness of each person finds its highest expression.”<sup>67</sup>

Seamands describes this Trinitarian model of human interrelatedness as two-dimensional, including the vertical (God) and the horizontal (other humans and the rest of creation). Drawing from Mark Shaw’s work on the Gospel of John, Seamands becomes more specific, mentioning four qualities that define healthy, interpersonal relationships exemplified in the communion of the Three: 1. Full equality, 2. Glad submission, 3. Joyful intimacy, and 4. Mutual deference.<sup>68</sup> Focusing on these qualities of relational personhood, Seamands then discusses the way these actions are played out in the context of ministry in the church, small group involvement, and the family.

Moving on to ‘Joyful Intimacy in Ministry’, Seamands draws on the work of psychiatrist and pastoral theologian Frank Lake, whose reflections on the four Gospels describe four dynamic elements seen in the Father-Son relationship or joyful intimacy that were the fundamental sustainers of the personhood of Christ.<sup>69</sup> Lake describes the relationship between Father and Son in two phases. The first movement from the Father affirms and sustains the Son through the action of acceptance and approval. The second movement of the Father authenticates and empowers the mission of Jesus through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit so that the Father’s work will be accomplished.<sup>70</sup> Seamands holds that same relational exercise from the Father towards the Son through the Spirit is

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<sup>67</sup> Seamands, 34.

<sup>68</sup> Seamands, 35. Seamands credits Mark Shaw for the terminology used in naming the four qualities. Mark Shaw, *Doing Theology with Huck and Jim* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1993), p. 62.

<sup>69</sup> Seamands, 63-64.

<sup>70</sup> Seamands, 63-64.

available for all Christians participating in authentic ministry. The mission and ministry of Jesus did not stop when he ascended. His work and missions continues through his work in the Church empowered still by the Holy Spirit. Seamands then goes on to describe barriers to joyful ministry and the process needed to heal them.

Seamands next turns his attention to the concept of ‘Glad Surrender’ and how this applies to the minister. He turns to Hannah Hurnard’s book, *Hinds Feet On High Places* to illustrate through the story of a woman named ‘Much-Afraid’. The character of the story, ‘Much-Afraid’, after a difficult and treacherous climb to the top of the mountains, receives the new name of ‘Grace and Glory’. But with the gift of the new name comes a powerful moving compassion deep within her for those still left in the Valley of Humiliation that causes her to joyfully return to the Valley of Humiliation. Love’s joyful abandon is returning to share love in the places where she once suffered. Seamands continues by reminding pastors with a quote from Moltmann that the “cross is at the center of the Trinity” as Moltmann suggests, and that “... before the world was, the sacrifice was already in God. No Trinity is conceivable without the Lamb, without the sacrifice of love, without the crucified Son. For he is the slaughtered Lamb glorified in eternity.”<sup>71</sup>

Seamands suggests that this quality of glad surrender lies at the “heart of Christian life and ministry.” He reminds ministers that they are to “die to self” in order that they might “live for Christ.” He cautions that ministry itself can become an idol if the eye loses sight of God. Seamands argues that ministry itself must be surrendered just as

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<sup>71</sup> Seamands, 79.

Abraham surrendered Isaac on the altar so that ministry might be returned to its rightful place and again become a blessing.<sup>72</sup>

Seamands continues through the rest of the chapters of his book, weaving both Trinitarian theology and story, to teach Trinitarian Theology and the profound grounding that it provides to Christian Ministry. What Seamands applies to ministers is not exclusive to professional ministers but should equally apply to the missional life and calling of all Christians. The Trinitarian foundation that he applies to the understanding of ministers and ministry is exactly the same foundation that applies to every Christian and their unique gifting that the Lord provides. Through the grace offered in baptism, every Christian participates in the ministry of Jesus. For the Christian, all of life is a call to ministry. All vocations and all tasks can be surrendered to God that all things might be caught up in the passion and glory of the Trinity.

### **Miroslav Volf – “Being as God Is”**

Miroslav Volf and Michael Welker are editors of a fine book called, *God's Life in Trinity*.<sup>73</sup> In the book, eighteen contemporary theologians offer essays dedicated to honoring Jurgen Moltmann and the significance of his contribution to Trinitarian Theology on his ninetieth birthday. The essays are distributed over four parts addressing the themes: Trinity and Humanity, Trinity and Religious Traditions, Trinity and God-Talk, and Trinity and Historical Theology. It is not in the scope of this review to examine all eighteen essays, but to select the essays of Volf, Meeks, and Coakley as

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<sup>72</sup> Seamands, 81-95.

<sup>73</sup> Miroslav Volf, “Being as God Is: Trinity and Generosity,” in *God's Life in Trinity*, ed. Miroslav Volf and Michael Welker, 3-12 (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2006).

samples of the variety of issues that can and should be addressed in a university and church environment in developing a life specific vision for applying Trinitarian Theology in a missional life matrix.

Volf's preface essay, "Being as God Is: Trinity and Generosity", is written from the paradigm of social trinitarianism. Volf cautions that the debate between the social model as opposed to the psychological model is much of the time unproductive because; "each is inadequate to the extent to which it fails to accommodate the truth of the other."<sup>74</sup> He presents a matrix of exploration into "being as God is" by naming the four rubrics: of creativity, generosity, reconciliation, and identity.<sup>75</sup> In this essay, Volf limits himself to briefly exploring four areas of generosity.

Volf argues that freedom for Christians moves Christians to give freely, because that is what we experience in God, and because our participation in giving freely portrays our participation of the divine life by acting for the benefit of another. He argues that there are two ways that we can give for the good of another: One is giving because God delights to give and the other is giving because another person needs.<sup>76</sup>

The trinitarian pattern is that each divine person gives, receives, and returns, which produces divine pleasure. Volf uses the human example of sexual union at its best where the love between two people becomes a sacrament of love that includes both the human and the divine implications: "Pleasure – pleasure of the soul no less than of the

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<sup>74</sup> Volf, 5.

<sup>75</sup> Volf, 7.

<sup>76</sup> Volf, 7-8.

body – given to the other and for the other’s sake is then a pleasure received. A pleasure received by the other is, almost paradoxically, a pleasure returned to the giver.”<sup>77</sup>

Christians give because others need, and the example of the Trinity is a continual overflowing of gifts to creatures: “Love spills over the rim of the Trinitarian cycle of reciprocity, and gifts flow to creatures.”<sup>78</sup> Giving gifts as God gives to those who need, should foster dignity and bestow honor to the receiver instead of creating a sense of inequality and aggrandizement.

Volf’s last theme is the gift of communion. As God turns towards the world, the cycle that is perfect love and the exchanging of gifts begins its outbound flow, creating communion. Within that communion of the church, God gifts all his people in turn so that each can uniquely give to each other and the world. Volf cautions that selfishness, pride, and indolence can make Christians contributors to “ungenerous social environments”<sup>79</sup> and make us reluctant to give. The cure for such ungenerosity is found in returning to the truth found in the Trinity.

### **M. Douglas Meeks – Trinity and the Rethinking of the Nature of Property Ownership**

M. Douglas Meeks addresses the issue of trinity and property in his contributing chapter in *God’s Life in Trinity*.<sup>80</sup> Meeks believes that Moltmann’s work on rethinking the concept of divine power and freedom call for a critical examination of theories and

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<sup>77</sup> Volf, 9.

<sup>78</sup> Volf, 10.

<sup>79</sup> Volf, 12.

<sup>80</sup> M. Douglas Meeks, “The Social Trinity and Property,” in *God’s Life in Trinity*, eds. Miroslav Volf and Michael Welker, 13-21 (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2006).



practices concerning property. Meeks lists the contemporary global issues of property as it applies to poverty, hunger, unemployment, discrepancy of wealth and the destruction of the environment as issues that are based on erroneous concepts about God and man. In civil society, the possession of property is connected to the freedom and security for the individual. Ownership implies the individual has private and exclusive rights to the use of property. From a social Trinitarian perspective, it is not God's free choice to dispose of his creation as he determines. It is God's essence and nature found in eternal love that is the context of his mastery and actions over Creation.<sup>81</sup> This should cause the church to question the idea of ownership and think in terms of a love derived stewardship.

#### **Sara A. Coakley – The Impact of Trinity on the Nature of Gender**

Sara A. Coakley's essay credits both Jurgen and Elisabeth Moltmann for their contribution, in particular, concerning the gender themes that are woven into Moltmann's writings on the Trinity. In Coakley's essay, she calls into question any assigning of gender attributes to the Trinity beyond the use of metaphor and believes Moltmann's brief talk of "transsexuality" in God might be a much more appropriate understanding.<sup>82</sup>

She approaches the gender issue in light of Trinitarian thought by re-examining Galatians 3:28 and Paul's indication that all distinctions are to be removed in the coming order of things. She points out that the other two distinctions (i.e. racial differences – Jew and Greek, and social differences – slave and free) are worded differently ("neither ...nor") from the gender issue ("neither male and female"). She proposes that the intent of the

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<sup>81</sup> Meeks, 16-17.

<sup>82</sup> Sara A. Coakley, "The Trinity and Gender Reconsidered," in *God's Life in Trinity*, 133-142 (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2006).

passage informs Paul's audience that there is a re-ordering of creature differences, "... not that maleness and femaleness are necessarily obliterated by what Paul envisages, either now or eschatologically, but rather that they are rendered spiritually insignificant, or ... nonbinary in their possibilities, in the face of the Spirit's work and our transformations into Christ's body."<sup>83</sup>

Lastly, Coakley raises the questions: "What 'difference' does it make to the issue of gender that God is three? Also, what difference does it make to gender that in the Incarnation the Son crosses (and we might say transgresses) the ultimate ontological binary "difference" – that between God and humanity, Creator and created?"<sup>84</sup> Could it be that in creation, God never intended male-female relationships to be binary, left alone within themselves, but always intimately linked with the Trinity and therefore triadic in relationship? It is only in the fall of mankind that the intimate link with God is broken and the issues of power and dominance are brought into the equation of relationship between the sexes. If the triadic relationship of communion has now been restored within the context of male-female relationship, what are the implications for society, the family and the church?

### **James K.A. Smith – Formation of the Social Imagination and Desires**

This book could have been part of the literary review focused on Christian education, but Smith reminds us that "behind every constellation of educational practices is a set of assumptions about the nature of human persons – about the kind of creatures

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<sup>83</sup> Coakley, 140.

<sup>84</sup> Coakley, 139-140.

we are.”<sup>85</sup> Smith argues convincingly that it is the liturgies, (which he defines as worship)<sup>86</sup>, whether they are “sacred” or “secular” in nature, “shape and constitute our identities by forming our most fundamental desires and our most basic attunement to the world.”<sup>87</sup> Put another way, our primal orientation to the world that determines what kinds of people we are, is based more on that which we are truly involved in *loving* rather than what we know or even believe. Smith reflects:

“The reason we emphasize that this is a matter of love is to signify that our orientation to what’s ultimate is not primarily on the order of thinking. It’s not what I think that shapes my life from the bottom up; it’s what I desire, what I love, that animates my passion. To be human is to be the kind of creature who is oriented by this kind of primal, ultimate love – even if we never really reflect on it. In fact, sometimes this subterranean, prereflective desire governs us most powerfully precisely when we don’t reflect on it.” This can be a problem.<sup>88</sup>

That which we esteem and pursue primes us to see the world in a particular way, to value certain things over others, to desire and work towards a particular goal, to dream of the possible in a certain way, to work in a group to accomplish a particular goal.<sup>89</sup> The orientations of our physical bodies make the priority of “formation” take precedence over “information” in the “task of shaping and creating a certain kind of people.”<sup>90</sup> Smith uses the examples of how participation in the “liturgy” of the shopping mall and sport arena

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<sup>85</sup> James K.A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 28.

<sup>86</sup> Smith, 85-88. Smith defines liturgies or worship as those actions and thoughts that become the preoccupations in our lives, the center of our devotions, that which directs our imagination and claims our passions.

<sup>87</sup> Smith, 25.

<sup>88</sup> Smith, 51.

<sup>89</sup> Smith, 25.

<sup>90</sup> Smith, 26.

shape habits and form practices that nourish desires, and images the objects of our love, and captivates us to set goals (*telos*) to attain ‘the good life.’

From this launching point, Smith proposes the axiom: “Behind every pedagogy is a philosophical anthropology.” Or as he rephrases it, “behind every constellation of educational practices is a set of assumptions about the nature of human persons – about the kind of creatures we are.”<sup>91</sup> It is at this point that Smith enters into the problematic of the current practices of the Christian university that still largely pursues the idea that knowledge dissemination produces knowledge and that will shape the students becoming.

Smith sees the Christian university as informing the student on a cognitive level by providing information that operates under the mistaken idea that the body only functions as a “container for our minds.”<sup>92</sup> Therefore by educating the mind to think correctly, occupying it with a set of ideas, principles, claims and propositions, the end result of “correct thinking” will somehow lead to a transformed life. Smith argues that this approach starts with an erroneous modernistic view of personhood based on the dualistic view of mind and body as distinctive parts of the person. The reality is that humans are so completely embodied beings that the formation of the human being is not even a largely cognitive knowledge-based action.<sup>93</sup> Smith illustrates this point in terms of the nature of Christian discipleship that demands more than correct thinking, the central formative role of who we are as persons is more shaped by our animal habits and instincts than we wish to acknowledge:

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<sup>91</sup> Smith, 27-28.

<sup>92</sup> Smith, 32.

<sup>93</sup> This does not negate the value of knowledge or the need for it, it just places it in a more proper perspective.

Being a disciple of Jesus is not primarily a matter of getting the right ideas and doctrines and beliefs into your head in order to guarantee proper behavior; rather, it's a matter of being the kind of person who loves rightly – who loves God and neighbor and is oriented to the world by the primacy of that love.<sup>94</sup>

Smith argues that in order to be that kind of people, the material practices of immersion in Christian worship over time changes the heart and therefore converts the heart and transforms our desires. Smith uses the word “liturgy”<sup>95</sup> to describe the realm of formative Christian practices incorporated in the life of discipling communities. Christian education that fails to recognize and address the importance of formative Christian practices fails to counter the cultural practices that shape the desires of the heart cannot expect to provide an effective competitive alternative to the visceral formative practices of a consumer oriented society. Christian education must be a heart and mind strategy

...that trains us as disciples precisely by putting our bodies through a regimen of repeated practices that get hold of our heart and “aim” our love toward the kingdom of God. Before we articulate a worldview, we worship. Before we put into words the lineaments of an ontology or an epistemology, we pray for God's healing and illumination. Before we theorize the nature of God, we sing his praises. Before we express moral principles, we receive forgiveness. Before we codify the doctrine of Christ's two natures, we receive the body of Christ in the Eucharist. Before we think, we pray. That's the kind of animals we are, first and foremost: loving, desiring, affective, liturgical animals who, for the most part, don't inhabit the world as thinkers or cognitive machines.<sup>96</sup>

Smith holds that the terminology “Christian worldview” or “Christian point of view” as used in Christian environments is usually understood as a correct set of propositions or a system of beliefs about God and man, and inadequately describes the real task that should be the work of the Christian university. Smith advocates replacing

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<sup>94</sup> Smith, 32.

<sup>95</sup> Smith, 27.

<sup>96</sup> Smith, 33-34.

the term “worldview” with the term “social imaginary” that not only addresses the cognitive side of andragogy but considers the dissemination of social “understanding” that is embedded in Christian practices.<sup>97</sup>

Smith proposes the term “Christian universities” (as the center for dissemination of Christian ideas) be replaced with “ecclesia colleges” (institutions linked to the church and its’ practices). Smith’s underlying proposal for “ecclesia colleges,” he claims, addresses not only a “theology of anthropology” but expands to a “theology of culture.” His “Christian cultural theory” which he elaborates in the rest of his book proposes that:

1. It is necessary that human persons need to be understood as *embodied actors* rather than merely thinking things.
2. *Practices* rather than ideas need to be prioritized as the site of challenge and resistance.
3. Looks at cultural practices and institutions through the lens of worship or liturgy.
4. Retains a robust sense of *antithesis* without being simply “anticultural.”<sup>98</sup>

It was a rather difficult decision to place Smith’s book in this section on Theological Anthropology as opposed to utilizing it more in the chapter addressing Christian Higher Learning. Ultimately the decision came down to Smith’s insights addressing Theological Anthropology and his analysis of what is a human being in light of creation. Smith’s approach provides a much-needed insight into the mind, body, soul nexus, and the art of Christian formation. At the end of the day, if Christian higher education only takes into account the mental development of the human person, how much has that shaped the desires and loves that determine our very being? How has knowledge altered the desires or transformed the heart? How is it possible to purge the earthly desires that keep us rooted to the passionate pursuit of false desires and loves?

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<sup>97</sup> Smith, 65.

<sup>98</sup> Smith, 35.

The mind plays an important part in transformation, so this is not a condemnation of need for the search for Christian knowledge; but ultimately if the quest is not about replacing the pursuit of idol worship and false loves with the understanding and practices of the *imago Dei*, then what is the education worth? Lifelong Christian learning means to be transformed by the cross of Christ, impassioned with desire for the kingdom, led by the Spirit, and caught up in participating in the *missio Dei*. This takes the work of God, the liturgical practices and participation of a faithful community, as well as knowledge and understanding.

### **Timothy Tennent – Trinitarian Mission is an Invitation to World Missions**

Timothy Tennent's motive for writing his most recent work *Invitation to World Missions: A Trinitarian Missiology for the Twenty-first Century*<sup>99</sup> resulted from his conviction that: "the Trinity is the seminal relationship that lies behind all human relationships."<sup>100</sup> This truth leads Tennent to advocate for a Trinitarian missiology that he believes is fundamental for the church's "post-Christendom engagement with a relativistic, postmodern world."<sup>101</sup> Tennent asserts that grounding believers in a Trinitarian theology is foundational for moving the church to a more vibrant encompassing missiology that inspires the church to fully embrace missional living.<sup>102</sup> Trinitarian theology, when rightly understood, mobilizes all of the church and not just a

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<sup>99</sup> Timothy C. Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions: A Trinitarian Missiology for the Twenty-first Century* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2010).

<sup>100</sup> Tennent, 78.

<sup>101</sup> Tennent, 78.

<sup>102</sup> Missional living can be defined as living in the constant awareness of the *missio Dei* by fully embracing – both in the life of the church and the individual – a continual faithful witness about God's work in the world. Missional living accepts no dichotomy in the Christian life between church, home, and the market place. All realms of life are under the sovereignty of God.

select few. One venue for the dissemination of a Trinitarian missiology is through the emphasizing of a Trinitarian theology with young adults within the walls of the Christian university that will prepare them for a sustainable integrated missional worldview as they move from the role of students into the public domain as contributing adults.

Scholarship motivated by love provides a unique window into the workings of the world. Paul the apostle makes the astute observation (1st Corinthians 8:1-3) that knowledge might free us and give us the ability to see things as they really are, but there is also the great danger that knowing might also move us to think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think. Paul argues that knowledge was a liberating quality because Christians who were “knowledgeable” in the faith knew idols were nothing and therefore they could eat meat offered to idols. But without the quality of mature love for God that creates a humble empathetic love for their neighbor, they would be led to think of themselves as superior and become indifferent to the needs of those around them. In Christ, the motivation for participating in the arts and science as well as entering vocations such as business, social work, politics, etc. becomes a humble love for God and for the neighbor. Faith provides the “knowing”; knowing God moves to hope in the *missio Dei* and the consummative event the Father initiated, the Son redeems, and the Spirit empowers; love for God and for neighbor defines the Christian’s motivation in entering and participating in the story of God’s mission.

A theology of the Social Trinity and subsequent Trinitarian based anthropology provides a new re-imagining for the ‘community’ of the church and the ‘personhood’ of all believers. The knowledge of the Trinity is, as LaCugna puts it, “ultimately a practical



doctrine with radical consequences for Christian life.”<sup>103</sup> The truth of the Trinity is transformative even to the extent that this truth (through grace) changes the Christian’s identity ontologically and transforms the life and practice of the Church into communion with God. As Zizioulas phrases it, the Church is a “mode of existence, a way of being.”<sup>104</sup> As discovered in this review, Trinitarian thought is transformative to the personhood of the believer affecting all relationships from God, to family, to church, and creation.

The implications of the Social Trinity and the subsequent theologically defined anthropology are a corrective to the Western ‘from below’ anthropology of the human person as an autonomous individual. For the autonomous and self-defined individual, relationship with others is based on subjective needs and desires to achieve self-fulfillment. Theologically defined ‘ecclesial personhood’ in contrast, teaches that ‘being or personhood’ is defined through our communion with God. Realizing communion and fulfillment in God begins the salvific process of restored relationships with humankind and the rest of creation. This allows us to move beyond the idea of a “Christian Worldview” engaging mind and heart together in community to “socially imagine” what a fully realized creation and live in the “yet but not yet” as a believing and practicing community. As Moltmann so aptly describes this identity of “ecclesial personhood” being defined by Christ’s passion and glory:

Believers enter into the fellowship of Christ’s sufferings and take the impress of the cross — become cruciform. They hope to become of like form with the transfigured body of Christ in glory (Phil. 3.21). That is why we can talk about both ‘our crucified Brother’ and ‘our risen Brother’. What is meant is the whole form of existence which is lived by Jesus Christ and which takes its stamp from him. There is no fellowship with Jesus the Son except what we find in fellowship with Jesus the brother. Fellowship with Jesus the brother is participation in his

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<sup>103</sup> Lacugna, *God For Us*, 377.

<sup>104</sup> Zizioulas, 15.

mission and his fate. Fellowship with Jesus the brother means ultimately participation in the liberation of the whole enslaved creation, which longs for the 'revealing of the liberty of the Sons of God' (Rom. 8.19, 21) and for the experience of the 'redemption of the body' (Rom. 8.23).<sup>105</sup>

This social imaginary sees all of creation as being sacrificially loved and sustained through the work of the Trinity. That very passion of the Trinity becomes the passion of the Church that sacrifices and suffers for the sake of love's fulfillment as she can see and begin to experience the completion of God's handiwork. The Church becomes the recipient of God's love but also the outpouring of God's love to the world. The Church in response to God's love is to, from the overflow of love, love like God by embracing his love and passion for all of creation. The life and work of God becomes our life. It transforms personal vocation into participation in the will of God. A Trinitarian understanding builds the personhood of each believer, defines us as community together with God, and moves us in celebration and worship. The starting point for forming a community of integrated faith, learning, and mission is to be found in knowing and falling in love with the Trinity.

Through knowing and experiencing communion with the Trinity, our perception of ourselves and others as 'persons in communion' transforms us. Trinitarian Theological Anthropology changes our perception of what is theological education. The New Testament term 'discipleship' fully engages the mind and body. It is a way of life together; continually experiencing the love of the Father through walking with the Son in the direction the Holy Spirit guides us. It is learning to move into our unique and particular personhood as loved and loving human beings connected to the body of Christ.

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<sup>105</sup> Moltmann, 121.

Theological education is all about engaging the Trinitarian God and becoming transformed in our uniqueness into his likeness.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **CHRISTIAN HIGHER LEARNING: THE CHALLENGES OF FORMING A CAPSTONE COURSE PROMOTING FAITH AND LEARNING**

Christian higher education represents an extremely complex heritage of European and American philosophy, theological development, culture, and history. The first part of this chapter is dedicated to the exploration of American Christian higher education as it developed in the modern era of Western civilization and the subsequent paradigm shift into the still emerging era commonly termed 'post modernity'. The second part focuses on the review of recent literature from Christian educators working within higher education that provides a way forward into Christian missional formation at the university level. The third section investigates recent literature addressing the nature of interdisciplinary studies and curriculum design for young adults. The double major venue initiated through the Bible department at Lipscomb University provides an ideal opportunity for the development of a Trinitarian Curriculum for missional living as the theological vision. The purpose of this literature review is to investigate the current best learning practices for the education of the young adult that will encourage each to enter into a life of discovery concerning both individual and collective participation in God's kingdom. Special consideration will focus on each student's gifting, preparation, and passions uncovered as an undergraduate, and then consideration of how those qualities contribute to missional living.

## Christian Education in America

### 1636 to the American Revolution in 1776

The founders of the first university in America viewed education and Christianity as inseparable. The beginning of the American collegiate experience traces its roots from the rich English and Scottish heritage of Christian-principled education. In 1636, Harvard became the first institution of higher education in the North American colonies. Harvard represented the educational ideal of the Protestant Reformation, holding to the belief that the study of all human knowledge (nested in the context of biblical revelation) would lead to the formation of the ideal citizen.

Because of the recognition Harvard received as one of the nation's first institutions of higher education, its pattern of instruction naturally became the model emulated by most other American colleges.<sup>1</sup> Discussions of higher education took place within the context of an overwhelmingly "Christian" worldview. This Christian perspective inhabiting higher education at Harvard is illustrated well in regulations admonishing instructors that "every student be plainly instructed and earnestly pressed to consider well [that] the main end of his life and studies is to know God and Jesus Christ which is eternal life, John 17:3, and therefore to lay Christ in the bottom, as the only foundation of all sound knowledge and learning."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Mark Noll, "The University Arrives in America", 1870-1930: Christian Traditionalism During the Academic Revolution," in *Making Higher Education Christian: The History and Mission of Evangelical Colleges in America*, edited by Joel A. Carpenter & Kenneth W. Shipps, 98-109 (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987), 100.

<sup>2</sup> Leland Ryken, "Reformation and Puritan Ideals of Education," in *Making Higher Education Christian: The History and Mission of Evangelical Colleges in America*, 38-51 (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1987), 41.

Harvard's early curriculum emphasized the study of Christian theology and Bible in its original languages. This core was supplemented by mathematics, astronomy, logic, rhetoric, philosophy, poetry, ethics, and history. The goal of this education was focused on forming the well rounded knowledgeable Christian person. The culmination of college included a capstone course that brought together all the strands of learning in order to prepare young men for a lifetime of pious service to God and country. This model of education was the norm for higher education in America until the time of the American Revolution.<sup>3</sup>

#### The American Revolution in 1776 until 1870

The American Revolution against England's rule dramatically impacted higher education as America entered the nineteenth century. The revolutionary spirit included casting off traditions in ways of governance, the separation of church and state, and society's growing shift away from traditional Christian values towards a humanistic modernist worldview. America's rejection of a monarchy exchanging it for the idea of governance through democracy represented a deeper revolution than just a change of governance. The Enlightenment that produced the idea of democracy planted the seed for change elsewhere. Traditions and practices of all longstanding institutions were thoroughly examined and criticized. Mark Noll observes that the American Revolution created a passion for innovation, the future, and egalitarianism as Americans dramatically abandoned tradition, history, and hierarchy. For the intellectual justification of independence from Britain as well as the rejection of old institutions and corrupt traditions, the new democratic America looked to the influential Enlightenment thinkers

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<sup>3</sup> Ryken, 41.

John Locke and Isaac Newton.<sup>4</sup> Rational thought and scientific method shaped the course for the future of America. In the formational period of the new republic, liberty, human rights, and individualism were idealized and pursued but influenced by Scottish moralists. Men such as Thomas Reid and Dugald Stewart, whose constraints of faith and reason, provided the structure for orderly change.<sup>5</sup> For this reason, the American Revolution embraced liberty and individual rights, yet avoided the chaos and anarchy that embroiled the French Revolution influenced by Enlightenment revolutionary thinkers like Voltaire and Rousseau.

For American colleges, the emphasis in college education shifted over the nineteenth century from the sacred towards the secular. Moral foundations shifted from reliance on scripture to reasoned deduction derived from observation. This shift appealed to what was considered universally recognizable human truth thereby affirming a God who reveals truth both in human reason and in scripture. The tremendous progress in what was perceived as the advancement of the human race produced a disproportionate confidence in science, experimentation and reason to the exclusion of any other possibilities. The confidence in human observation and reason extended into the world of the sacred and, for many influential educators, replaced revelation as the guide to truth. Yet these shifts were seen by Christian educators and pastors as confirmation of Christianity and scriptural truths rather than a competing paradigm.

Noll observes that while the United States population was overwhelmingly Protestant, Scottish Common Sense realism continued as the dominant perspective in

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<sup>4</sup> Ryken, 59.

<sup>5</sup> George M. Marsden, "The Collapse of American Evangelical Academia," in *Faith and Rationality: Reason and Belief in God*, ed. Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff, 219-264 (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983). 224.

American colleges. From the perspective of most Protestants, the vision for Christian values and morals were supported and proven through science and reason:

As long as American popular culture remained under Protestant influence, no one would question the analogy that Common Sense philosophy drew between the mind and the universe, and no one would question the way in which “science” (then the unquestioned authority) had been used to defend the traditional morality whose moorings were shaken in the Revolutionary period.<sup>6</sup>

#### Post Civil War Development of the University in America 1870 to 1940

From the time of the Civil War up to the time of World War II, American life experienced a progression of ever-accelerating changes equally reflected in the American system of higher education. During this time, the population of the United States tripled, growing from forty million to one hundred twenty three million people. At the same time, the number of colleges and universities almost tripled between the years of 1870 and 1930. But there was an even greater revolution occurring in the structure of the American University; scientific discovery and technical innovations accelerated, while advances and discoveries in the social sciences shifted the focus of education from the formation of the person to the preparation of professionals to fulfill utilitarian needs. As Western society reached the pinnacle of modernity, Christian education encountered challenges from every side that pressed for formidable changes. Yet Christian higher education of the nineteenth century continued to depend upon the “Common Sense Realist” approach of the previous century as the model for promoting a firm foundation of the Christian faith.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Noll, “The University Arrives in America”, 64.

<sup>7</sup> Noll, “The University Arrives in America”, 104-105. Common sense realism, Noll argues, had become a simplistic entrenched pattern for education that emphasized human intuition as a defense for



The reliance upon foundational thinking proved to be detrimental to Christian education on two levels. First, conservative Christian scholarship (still working from the underlying assumption that science and reason can prove and affirm supernatural beliefs) continued to approach and defend the Christian faith within the underlying assumptions and constraints of the modernist world view. This presumed alliance became increasingly difficult to defend in light of the unrelenting intrusion of scientific naturalism best illustrated by the growing public acceptance of evolution and the development of the discipline of higher criticism whose focus questioned the very nature of Scripture. Secondly, since most Christian education continued committed to the modernist paradigm, there was little new and innovative dialogue by Christian scholars with the growing number of those who were critically examining the epistemology of the modernist worldview. Christian scholarship continued in the pursuit of rationalistic argument as a defense for the gospel instead of seriously questioning the validity of some epistemological first principles.<sup>8</sup>

As the age progressed, George Marsden notes, Science became increasingly narrow in defining what could rightly be accepted as substantiating evidence. Science valued investigation into the ordered phenomena that could be observed through the senses and consequently undervalued any other kind of evidence. Until the end of the first half of the nineteenth century, the relationship between science and religion seemed to validate each other. Although different in nature, both were viewed as having a

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morality, science as the ultimate guide to understanding, and logic as the standard for arguing the existence of God.

<sup>8</sup> These thoughts will be explored further in considering Wolterstorff's observations in the following pages.

common foundation in God.<sup>9</sup> However this union of science and religion began to come unraveled in the latter half of the nineteenth century as science shifted from friend to foe. The fulcrum of this shift was centered in the Evangelical appeal to “evidence of design” that became the apologetic “proof” of evidence of God. This mutually affirming approach between Christianity and science seemed to work well until the second scientific revolution associated with Darwin. While it did not directly exclude God, Darwin’s theory provided an alternative explanation beyond the idea that there was universal evidence for ‘intelligent design.’ The appeal to common sense for objective proofs of God showed that “common sense” was not objective at all but based on prior assumptions. Other alternatives such as natural selection provided a replacement for the reasoning in favor of intelligent design.

The Christian community, having thoroughly trusted science and the scientific method, had welcomed them, even parading them as their staunchest friends.... This superficial accommodation left them with no defenses when the celebrated ally proved to be a heavily armed foe. No mere Trojan horse, we may add, had been imported into the Christian citadel. The very foundations of their defensive wall had been built by Greek philosophers and their modern scientific heirs and hid massive forces potentially hostile to the Christian religion.<sup>10</sup>

The almost exclusive trust in science as proof of the existence of God and confirmation of Scripture created a fatal flaw that opponents could fully exploit. At the end of the nineteenth century and in the first decades of the twentieth, the unthinkable happened – American Evangelical academia collapsed. Christians lost control of science, learning itself shifted from a comfortable “friend of the faith” to an antagonistic opponent and “pragmatic intellectual fragmentation” was perceived as a better way to shape

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<sup>9</sup> Marsden, 230.

<sup>10</sup> Marsden, 223.

citizens than an “integrative moral philosophy”.<sup>11</sup> The era of the new university propelled by modernistic practicality became the face of higher education. Men like Harvard President Charles Eliot and Cornell President Andrew Dickson White charted a course away from the traditional and allied themselves with philosophical idealism in order to break out of the mired realistic and absolutist instructional forms of the past. In addition, universities began looking for highly qualified faculty returning from graduate studies in Germany, where they had been steeped in the discipline of research, as well as idealism.<sup>12</sup> Mark Noll insightfully illustrates the waning of the Christian core and the radical shift that occurred in the mainstream of higher education by citing examples of the subtle yet dramatic changes in the premiere influential American universities:

At Harvard, compulsory chapel ceased in 1886. Ten years earlier the ceremonies at Johns Hopkins University, the country’s most professional center of higher learning, had included no invocation. And increasingly, after the Civil War, college presidents came from the ranks of faculty or even business, rather than from the pool of ministers who had filled almost all of the posts before this time.<sup>13</sup>

This trend was so invasive that it left the handful of remaining colleges that could still call themselves Christian defensively isolated and inadequately prepared to provide any kind of adequate response.

Walter Wolterstorff, a renowned proponent for Christian education, delves deeper into the collapse of Christian higher education alluded to by Noll and Marsden by focusing on the philosophical problem of the enlightenment/modern paradigm that had, over two hundred years, merged with the Christian approach to higher education.

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<sup>11</sup> Marsden, 223.

<sup>12</sup> Noll, “The University Arrives in America”, 99-100.

<sup>13</sup> Noll, “The University Arrives in America”, 102.

Wolterstorff utilizes Abraham Kuyper's analysis of what occurred in Holland a century earlier within higher education to speak into the same challenges this educational model represented for Christian higher education on this side of the Atlantic.<sup>14</sup> While Kuyper would have utilized Kant or some other neo-Kantian to illustrate what was happening in Christian education in Holland, Wolterstorff utilizes John Locke's philosophical legacy and its effect on Christian higher education in America.<sup>15</sup> Locke and his contemporaries believed that human culture was based on belief systems which were formed both from reliable methods of inquiry and unreliable/uncritical traditions and associations. Locke and others believed that it was possible for any rational and disciplined person to temporarily set aside the unreliable traditions and associations and utilize only perception, reflection, intellect, and reason to verify the truth.

This approach to seeking knowledge would lead to replacing the "parochial and the particular" beliefs with verifiable truth.<sup>16</sup> Of course, when this occurred, it was assumed that all men would be unified under the banner of Christ and Christianity would be fully established on the unshakable foundation of reason. In order to know what God

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<sup>14</sup> Abraham Kuyper, *Encyclopedia of Sacred Theology: Its Principles*, trans. J. Hendrik De Vries (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1898).

<sup>15</sup> Kant was to Europe and Holland what Locke was to Evangelical America. Holland was deeply influenced by the liberal modernist approach to theology. Liberal theologians viewed that the realm of science and rational thought as completely different from metaphysical knowledge of the spiritual realm and for them, the Spiritual experience became foundational for faith. Locke, on the other hand, deeply influenced the development of the conservative foundationalist approach to Christianity in America. Conservatives argued that science and rational thought could prove Christianity and the inspiration of Scripture. As the modernist philosophical approach became increasingly unsustainable, both conservative and liberal Christian higher educators found themselves arguing with each other based on the same modernist worldview. This left both ill equipped to address the radical shifts in the world around them for the same reason. Nancey Murphy, *Beyond Liberalism & Fundamentalism: How Modern and Postmodern Philosophy Set the Theological Agenda* (Harrisburg, PA.: Trinity Press International, 1996).

<sup>16</sup> Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Educating for Shalom: Essays on Christian Higher Education* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 210.

was requiring of humanity in terms of religious beliefs and morality, it was the obligation of people to employ the correct methods (such as the approaches articulated by Locke) in examining the evidence to arrive at the right conclusions. Thus “evidentialism” became the established practice of the Christian scholar for proving the legitimacy of Christianity within the academy. Dependence upon inductively designed arguments originating from natural religion replaced revelation and scriptural authority as the rational proof for theism.<sup>17</sup> Once theism was established, then one moved to the revealed Christian religion. Science and reason were seen to complement, sustain, and even defend the rationality of the Christian worldview.

.... if one believes that one does in fact have evidence of the requisite sort for one’s Christian beliefs, then one will naturally regard the articulation and presentation of such evidence as not only a legitimate but also an important part of the instructional program of the academy. Thus it was that a common part of the curriculum of North American Protestant colleges through the nineteenth century was a senior capstone course, typically taught by the college president, in which evidence for Christian belief was laid out for the students before they commenced their adult lives in the everyday.<sup>18</sup>

Wolterstorff follows Kuyper’s example by first giving a critique of the Christian educational assumptions in the Evangelical model of recent years that define the primary role for Christian academics as advancing evidential apologetics.<sup>19</sup> Christian educators utilizing this role model assumed that mature adults can, through disciplined training, put

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<sup>17</sup> Wolterstorff, 202-203.

<sup>18</sup> Wolterstorff, 202.

<sup>19</sup> There were some strong dissenting voices. This is what Karl Barth sought to avoid. Barth argued that the place of theology must be re-established: by renouncing “all apologetics or external guarantees of its position within the environment of other sciences, for it will always stand on the firmest ground when it simply *acts* according to the law of its own being ... The ‘place’ of theology ... will be determined by the impetus which it receives from within its own domain and from its own *object*. Its object—the philanthropic God Himself—is the law which must be the continual starting-point of theology. It is ... the post that the theologian must take and keep, whether or not it suits him or any of his fellow creatures. The theologian has to hold this post at all costs....” John Webster, *Karl Barth*, 2nd ed., (London: Cromwell Press Ltd., 2004), 175.

aside their personal parochial enculturation concerning beliefs and religion and, through the force of rational thought applied to science and religion, discover the truth of God and Christianity. Wolterstorff's criticism of evidential apologetics is that it has taken Christian scholarship along the wrong path based on false assumptions. Wolterstorff agrees with Kuyper that science itself is not and never can be just a result of an objective human quest to discover a universally perceived reality. Wolterstorff sums up Kuyper's insight in this way:

Reputable science is not some generically human phenomenon, the product solely of our shared nature, bearing no traces of the parochial and the contingent. Science is not lifted above our particularity. Science displays our particularities - and let me add, it displays our fallenness, along with our devious attempts to conceal that fallenness. Science is always a modern Western, or a medieval Arabic, or an ancient Oriental, phenomenon, or whatever. Science is the outcome of a complex interplay of insight, of the constraints of our nature as it interacts with reality, and of the positivity of our social circumstances and individual decisions. It is itself a project of science to discover, in so far as we can, where one of these leaves off and another begins. We do not first complete that project before we do science. We engage in it as part of the practice of science.<sup>20</sup>

Reflecting back on this era of change, Noll commends the Christian colleges in their preservation of a holistic ideal that opposed the pragmatic intellectual fragmentation of the day. Christian institutions continued to provide students with a strong liberal arts education and extracurricular activities that focused on forming the whole person:

A college career, in the view of these colleges, was not meant primarily to show an individual how to benefit from the world but rather how the world could benefit from the individual. Christian educators had this motive but an even higher one as well. Not just service to the world but service to Christ was the aim of a Christian education.<sup>21</sup>

Noll notes that in spite of this laudable resistance to the seemingly irresistible

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<sup>20</sup> Wolterstorff, 117.

<sup>21</sup> Wolterstorff, 104.

forces of cultural conformity, Christian colleges failed to respond to the more critical crises of the time in two ways. First, Noll argues that the Christian adaptation of eighteenth century moral philosophy, with its focus on the individual, left Christian education off-balance when it came to addressing institutional issues of morality and ethics.<sup>22</sup> In light of the rapid advancement of science, technology, politics, and financial structures, the Western world desperately needed moral guidance from Christian scholarship that addressed morality and ethics in its corporate structures. Yet, in Noll's opinion, Christian higher education was remarkably silent and ill prepared to address the critical needs of the age. At the same time, the secular university, armed with the tools of research and specialization, had plenty to say concerning their vision for the future. Their approach seemingly continued to advance secular society to new heights of prosperity and progress through the efforts of learning and knowledge alone.

A second problem that Christian colleges encountered was the increasing distance that separated the discipline of theology from the rest of the vocational disciplines. As Noll sees it, the seminaries became the victims of their own success as they came into their own. Seminaries specialized in training professionals dedicated to the study of Scripture and theology to serve in church ministry or in preparation for teaching and research within the academic confines of the seminary. This isolationist approach provided little opportunity for cross-pollination with the broader range of academic topics taught in the liberal arts colleges. Cutting edge research into Bible and theology had little interaction with cutting edge research in the arts and sciences. Noll observes: "The earlier development of separate theological training ruled out an ideal Christian learning, in which penetrating thinking about special revelation would coexist alongside

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<sup>22</sup> Wolterstorff, 105-106.

penetrating thinking about revelation in nature, with each task fructifying the other.”<sup>23</sup>

The combination of the above mentioned weaknesses in Christian education resulted in a failure to provide a integrated vision of church and kingdom capable of providing a attractive alternative vision to the modernistic positive idealism prevalent in most institutions of higher learning. While Christian education pursued preparation for the Christian life and the incorporation of ethical principles into vocation, there was no clear vision as to the exact nature of the Christian pursuit of vocation in relation to the *missio Dei*. Lacking was a clear voice from Evangelical education addressing what it means to live within the kingdom of God. The message of salvation and kingdom living rarely progressed farther than the call to individually accept the lordship of Jesus Christ, participate in church, evangelize others, defend the Faith, and live morally responsible ethical lives. All of these goals are quite important, but fall short of providing an integrative or holistic vision for a dynamic life of discipleship.

The dualistic life so prevalent in the modern age was also the given for Evangelical higher education. Confession of Jesus as Lord for the individual still left room for a parallel professional life to be pursued by the Christian. On this track of vocation, the Christian’s responsibilities were relegated to the narrow focus of responsible stewardship in order to “provide for the family” and tithe to the church. What was lacking was a clearly articulated theology providing a vision for gifting and equipping in full kingdom participation. After all, Christians would at their deaths or the return of Jesus, leave this world behind. The vision of what it meant to live a Christian life appeared to be life lived in three separate realms: life in the marketplace, life with

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<sup>23</sup> Wolterstorff, 105-106.



family, and life as a participant in church. Christian life bounced back and forth between secular professional lives and family – Monday through Saturday and church on Sunday from ten to twelve. The needs and desires of secular society became the overpowering vision for morals, ethics and goals in vocation. The individualistic pursuit of the American way of life, Wall Street, free enterprise, and faith in science and knowledge spoke more to ethics and behavior than did a Christ-disciplined vision of life lived in the kingdom of God.

#### 1945 to the Present

Much of what has been described in Christian education since the Civil War continued to influence in varying degrees a deepening discussion about the recent nature of Christian higher education and the urgency for broadening the conversation with post modernity. In addressing the state of Christian higher education in the United States since World War II to the present, history professor Thomas Askew provides a useful description of the three phases experienced by Evangelical Christian colleges in the last sixty to seventy years.<sup>24</sup>

First, beginning in the nineteen thirties and forties, Christian colleges became insular, focusing on the needs and heritage of their founding Christian tradition. The choice of president for said institutions was a respected and influential clergyman or church leader whose work consisted of maintaining good public relations within their church constituency, overseeing the recruitment and discipling of students, selecting faculty, and administrating the entire institution.

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<sup>24</sup> Thomas A. Askew, "The Shaping of Evangelical Higher Education Since World War II," in *Making Higher Education Christian*, ed. Joel A. Carpenter and Kenneth W. Shipps, (Grand Rapids: Christian University Press, 1987), 137-152.

Second, starting in the late fifties and running through the sixties, the second phase focused on increasing enrollment, clarifying the nature of the institution such as “faith-affirming” or “defender of the faith,” raising academic standards, improving faculty standards, investing in the physical expansion of their respective campuses and building relationships with academic associations and government agencies.

Third, from the seventies through the nineties, Christian colleges sought to improve professionalism, worked to expand of educational networks, and increased the dialogue addressing the theoretical complexities of Christian higher education. Askew observes that the vision justifying the Christian university requires a delicate balance that is difficult to achieve. The very heart and soul justifying the existence of Christian universities is a continual work in progress filled with dialectical tensions. The contemporary Christian university must exist as a corporation focused on the complex needs of diverse colleges in preparing students for success in a competitive global market. The university is itself in competition with multiple institutions that offer competing programs that prepare students for the professional world. It would be financial and educational suicide to ignore this reality. The opposing tension, of course, is the Christian university’s missional call to prepare students to integrate all of life through faithful demonstration of the discipleship of Jesus by educators and staff.

These two sides of the Christian university are sometimes complementary and easily integrated but more often they are competing ideals, values, and procedures. Conforming corporate management, free-enterprise, business practices, and market orientations to discipleship and kingdom life is a very formidable task.<sup>25</sup> In spite of the

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<sup>25</sup> Askew, 149.

challenges that these tensions represent, this is also what kingdom work is all about and provides opportunities for witness concerning the truthfulness of the *missio Dei*.

Michael Hamilton and James Mathisen in their chapter titled “Faith and Learning at Wheaton College”<sup>26</sup> analyze the efforts to contextualize faith and learning throughout Wheaton’s history. The first model defined by Hamilton and Mathisen as the “Convergence Model”, held sway at Wheaton throughout most of the nineteenth century. This model for Christian education viewed divinely revealed knowledge and natural knowledge as complete and complimentary structures whose architect was God. Under this approach, Christianity and natural knowledge mutually confirmed each other, and the resulting vision provided for its practitioners a sense of coherent unity for all areas of learning. However, the final years of the nineteenth century witness the demise of this perceived bliss as secularism postulated more naturalistic explanations that increasingly conflicted with the Christian perceptions of Biblically confirmed truth.<sup>27</sup>

Second, as the old model became untenable, Christian education reacted to what Hamilton and Mathisen referred to as the “Triumphalist Model.”<sup>28</sup> American intellectual culture began to view Christian-based empirical reasoning as being inferior and at odds with the empirical research in both the natural and social sciences. Christianity, along with other religions, would disappear as they were rationally disqualified by any means of measurable evidence. The resulting triumphal language on the side of the secularist

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<sup>26</sup> Michael S. Mathisen and James A. Hamilton, “Faith and Learning at Wheaton College,” in *Models for Christian Higher Education: Strategies for Success in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Richard T. Hughes and William B. Adrian, 261-283 (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997).

<sup>27</sup> Mathisen and Hamilton, 268-269.

<sup>28</sup> Mathisen and Hamilton, 269.

view created an equally opposite triumphal reaction for those promoting a Christian-based foundation for knowledge. Those in the Christian camp believed that the secular theories in conflict with the Christian-based understanding of the world were erroneous and would collapse under unbiased investigation. From their point of view, the Christian way of knowing was inherently superior and naturally all other knowledge would eventually fade into irrelevancy. Instead of working to bring faith and learning together, the goal of this model became to subject learning to faith. For both secular and religious educators at the opposite ends of the triumphal model, a radical separation between faith and learning was something to be glorified.<sup>29</sup> But for many Christian educators, the separation between faith and learning was not satisfactory and the hard work of bringing the two together again took two different paths: “the value added model” and “the integration” model.<sup>30</sup>

Third, the “value added” model maintained a neutral position towards secular knowledge by keeping faith and learning as equally important but addressing different kinds of knowledge. When these different kinds of knowledge were applied wisely, both were mutually enriched. Faith addressed the ethical and the transcendent and provided answers to the meaning of life. Secular knowledge equally enriched faith by contributing the answer as to how things functioned in understanding God’s creative handiwork. This model of Christian higher education focused on two goals. One centered on providing a quality education in the liberal arts that would prepare students in order to professionally excel in existing order and economy of society. The other centered on providing moral

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<sup>29</sup> Mathisen and Hamilton, 269-270.

<sup>30</sup> Mathisen and Hamilton, 275-281.

guidance and spiritual meaning to life in order to prepare adults for living ethical lives that purpose and value: “In this model, there is no distinctive to undertake the study of any academic discipline, and no academic discipline can alter the fundamental outlines of Christianity. Academic disciplines, properly pursued, are by themselves value-neutral; their methodologies are the same regardless of one’s values.”<sup>31</sup>

Fourth, the alternative path to the “value added” model for Wheaton resulted in the “Integration Model” proposed by Arthur F. Holmes during his tenure at Wheaton.<sup>32</sup> Mathisen and Hamilton argue that this approach begins with the premise that the systems of “discovered knowledge and revealed knowledge” cannot by themselves provide a complete picture. Put together and in dialogue with each other, they provide a path (albeit rocky) that informs and transforms. Both discovered knowledge and Christian knowledge are subject to criticism in an honest search for understanding.<sup>33</sup>

### Current Practice in Christian Higher Education

Wolterstorff’s observation concerning the present time is that, generally speaking, Christian higher education is still approaching education from a modernistic Christian foundational model.<sup>34</sup> In the educator’s opinion, this apologetic approach based on the modern foundational structure is the same philosophically framed theism of Locke’s heritage covered by a thin veneer of Christian content. Wolterstorff illustrates by using

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<sup>31</sup> Mathisen and Hamilton, 270.

<sup>32</sup> Arthur F. Holmes, *The Idea of a Christian College*, Revised Edition (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987). Holmes along with others from Wheaton was instrumental in Wheaton’s shift to the integration model still used today. His contribution will be further addressed later in this chapter.

<sup>33</sup> Holmes, 271.

<sup>34</sup> Wolterstorff, 203-206.

the Southern Baptist institute –Baylor, and the state run university – Texas Tech, as examples. First, he argues that the curriculum of both would be unremarkably uniform. If the two curriculums were placed side by side, the only difference one would notice is the presence of additional bible courses and a capstone course at Baylor, that Texas Tech would not include. The presence of the Bible courses, at Baylor combined with the argumentation presented in the capstone course are seen as legitimating the need for Christian education.

Second, Wolterstorff holds that the methods used for both the Bible courses and the capstone course, designed to legitimize and substantiate the Christian faith, present nothing uniquely Christian but are classes laid out in a modernist method of teaching emphasizing an awareness and retention of facts: “What motivated the presence of these courses in the curriculum was no doubt Christian belief, and appropriately so; but in the conduct of the course one was to place the Christian beliefs one already had in cold storage, never making use of them, and consider the evidence qua human being.”<sup>35</sup>

Third, according to Wolterstorff, there continues to be a lingering belief that if one set aside one’s everyday beliefs and attitudes and examines the evidences for Christianity openly, one will emerge a believer. Those who do not emerge believers must naturally be refusing to use unprejudiced and unbiased reason. Ultimately, it is assumed that properly conducted research would lead to conclusions compatible with Christianity and if it did not, then it had to be defective scholarship.

Instead of the apologetic approach based on the modern foundational structure that so much of Christian education continues to pursue, Wolterstorff suggests the need

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<sup>35</sup> Wolterstorff, 204.

for the unapologetic expression of the Christian faith in the world of academics. The Christian voice is equally as much a part of the conversation as that of the atheist, Buddhist, Muslim, male, feminist, or any other perspective. In searching for knowledge, the process of learning is not an individual endeavor but necessarily is an act of community. We learn from others who have gone before us, and learning occurs in cooperation, discovery, dissent and dialogue with those who are our teachers, peers, and opponents. Knowledge is always formed and shaped by underlying beliefs and assumptions. All pursuit of learning is heavily moderated by the worldview that is brought to the task of gaining knowledge. Wolterstorff argues that interpretation of what is considered reason and data is always filtered through one's fundamental beliefs and habits: "We are deeply attached to some of our beliefs; some of our beliefs are even formed (in part) by our attachments. And all of us, in acting intentionally, act on beliefs and out of motives."<sup>36</sup>

The strong educational impulse in the Reformed tradition especially influenced by the thought of Abraham Kuyper provides a more viable model that repudiates the idea that knowledge and the process of discovery could present a reality devoid of value-laden worldviews. Wolterstorff visualizes a Christianity completely comfortable in a dialogue which embraces the idea that all learning and knowledge are by nature value laden and commitment driven and that Christian value-laden knowledge and commitment are absolutely essential to the pluralistic conversation in academia. This innovative model proposes the integration of faith and learning that is visionary instead of defensive,

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<sup>36</sup> Wolterstorff, 74.

proactive instead of reactive, and ultimately promotes a genuinely Christian advocacy in contrast to a philosophically-framed theism with added Christian content.

### **Models of Integration of Christian Faith and Scholarship**

The integration model has been the principle influence in the revival of Evangelical/Protestant dialogue concerning the nature of Christian scholarship since the mid-1970's.<sup>37</sup> At the end of World War II, most evangelicals began to emerge from the influence of early twentieth-century fundamentalism and its anti-intellectual isolation. As the desire for higher education increased, so did the strong desire to demonstrate that believing Christians could practice scholarship in the academic disciplines on a level equal to their unbelieving colleagues.

A new generation of evangelicals knew they perceived the world differently than most of their teachers and peers even before they entered the rigors of study at the universities. While they knew they had much to learn, they assumed from the beginning that they would not always agree with their professors and even “often assumed that some of the key thinkers in their disciplines had been deeply mistaken about the nature of human life and the makeup of the universe.”<sup>38</sup> This view led many of them to skepticism that university learning could be in fact equated with the pursuit of truth.

True truth, as some of them liked to say, came only from God. Rather than being in graduate school to learn truth, they were there to prove their intellectual mettle, to refine their thinking skills, and to be duly certified by the guardians of the American (liberal) academy. Having been credentialed in that way, they felt they had earned the right to be heard when they confronted modern learning with the claims of faith.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Douglas Jacobsen and Linda Husted Jacobsen, *Scholarship and Christian Faith* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 16.

<sup>38</sup> Jacobsen and Jacobsen, 17.

<sup>39</sup> Jacobsen and Jacobsen, 18.



Though the secular university with its plurality of philosophical influences fully represented a particular biased perception of the search for truth, the newly emerging evangelical scholars respected the truth that could be found through the pursuit of the scholarly disciplines. Their bias, after all, was the belief that all truth, no matter how it was discovered, belonged to God. The goal of the Christian scholar was then twofold: “(1) to critique the premises of modern learning when and where they directly conflicted with Christian truth, and (2) to discover the ways modern learning at its best might either reinforce or refine the truths of faith.”<sup>40</sup> These two guiding principles became the initial foundation for the integration model for pursuing the idea of Christian Scholarship.

### **Arthur Holmes: Integrated Education Addressing Scholarship and Faith**

Arthur Holmes argues that the integration of faith and learning should not be characterized as an apologetic for the Christian faith but as a nexus for understanding the fruit of human learning and applying it “to an understanding of the faith and to the development of a Christian worldview; and with the positive contribution of the Christian faith to all the arts and sciences.”<sup>41</sup> Holmes believes that the real goal of Christian scholarship is to focus on an “integrating worldview” as an alternative to the contemporary university trend that “tends to concentrate on the parts rather than the whole” and creates a “fragmented view of life that lacks overall meaning.”<sup>42</sup> Holmes is careful to clarify that the Christian college experience should include congregational activity on campus that supports “cultivating piety and religious commitment,” but that

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<sup>40</sup> Jacobsen and Jacobsen, 18.

<sup>41</sup> Holmes, 46.

<sup>42</sup> Holmes, 57-58.

the Christian university's unique role is to apply the Christian faith in a way that touches the "entire range of life and learning to which a liberal education exposes students."<sup>43</sup>

Holmes believes that a principal task of Christian scholarship is to carefully examine the philosophical foundations that are the underlying blueprint for the direction of each of the academic disciplines and compare each of the foundational assumptions with a decidedly Christian worldview. Holmes argues that most people perceived their own worldview as unbiased without critical investigation. In the same way, most scholars perceive themselves as being unbiased searchers for truth, all the while filtering the questions and information they receive through their own particular prejudices. Holmes argues that in the modern university there is the aggressive promotion of diverse worldviews just as evangelistic as the promotion of Christianity by believers. The modern university projects itself as being neutral while in reality it is a chorus of voices competing for attention:

When a multitude of studies is conducted with no interrelationships the university becomes multiversity. In theory the university rejects attempts to teach any one conception of the world but in practice it teaches a fragmented view of life. Even to take a "neutral" position is to take some position. The worldviewish issues cannot be avoided.<sup>44</sup>

Holmes argues that it is the rightful work of Christian scholars to probe and clarify all worldviews including their own because followers of Christ do not have the luxury of a blissful life of self-ignorance in regards to their own philosophical underpinnings.

### **Nicholas Wolterstorff : "Educating for Shalom"**

Nicholas Wolterstorff, like Holmes, embraced the idea of the integration of faith and learning but examined in more detail the task of the actual implementation of

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<sup>43</sup> Holmes, 45.

<sup>44</sup> Holmes, 57.

integrating faith and learning in academics. Wolterstorff differs from Holmes in that he sees the academy as a place where the competition of theories and shared questions hold an academic discipline together more than any common foundational assumptions. Wolterstorff believes that Holmes views the competing voices in the university as more of a threat, he in turn views open dialogue in the academy as a place where the competition of theories, shared questions, and even worldviews works to keep the academic disciplines honest. Towards this goal, Wolterstorff proposes a conversational model for integrated faith and learning in academics. Christian scholars who have moved past the need to justify foundational assumptions become strong voices in promoting their Christian faith in the competitive world of ideas and the search for knowledge. All scholars are faced with the need to make choices as to what theories are worthy of consideration: "And all scholars, not just Christians, had 'control beliefs' that deeply affected their choice of one theory over another."<sup>45</sup> The Christian perspective is a voice that should be part of the dialogue concerning academic matters. Therefore the Christian scholar, like every other scholar, should feel at liberty in utilizing their Christian faith as valid criteria for their preferring one theory over another. Instead of working to "disentangle" and "prune" Christianity from learning and science, thereby leaving both inadequate and unrecognizable, Wolterstorff proposes that "... we throw away the pruning shears and live with the entanglement."<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Jacobsen and Jacobsen, 22.

<sup>46</sup> Wolterstorff, 192.

## Wolterstorff's Review of Models for Curricular Integration

Wolterstorff believes that there are four dominant curricular models existing in evangelical Christian colleges today<sup>47</sup>: First, the *Christian Service Model* emphasizes the training of students in a specific range of generally recognized ministry occupations that fall into the standard category of ecclesiastical work. These include ministries such as evangelism, Christian education, church work, cross-cultural missions and Christian communications. Wolterstorff holds that this model continues to be a popular curricular model for many Christian educators and some universities today although most educators and Christian universities find it too restrictive and are searching for other alternatives. Second, the most prominent alternative to the Christian Service Model is the *Christian Humanist Model*. This model emphasizes freedom, and in terms of a university education, the goal is to “liberate” the student from her/his own enclosed and restricting particularities of one’s own existence by initiation into a more universal human consciousness. In this model the Christian student, through the means of a liberal arts education, not only invests the world with meaning, but also invests her/his cultural heritage with meaning. In terms of Christian education, the goal for this model is to initiate the student into the Christian way of thinking.<sup>48</sup> Third, the *Christian Academic-discipline Model* sees the integration of faith and academics as a process of introducing the student to the academic disciplines and theory that provides them with powerful tools to understand the world around them thereby opening new horizons of consciousness.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Wolterstorff, 87-99.

<sup>48</sup> Wolterstorff, 156-157.

<sup>49</sup> Wolterstorff, 157-159.

Fourth, the *Christian Vocation*, or *Socialization Model*, is an amplified version of the *Christian Service Model*. Instead of focusing on a narrow range of vocations that are considered traditional Christian vocations of the church, this model emphasizes training students for participating in the kingdom of God in whatever vocation or role they enter. The emphasis is on preparation for kingdom participation through all Spirit-gifted vocations in life.<sup>50</sup>

Wolterstorff acknowledges that as he progressed through the educational process, he at different times embraced each of these models:

Originally I embraced the Christian humanist model. That was the dominant model in my own collegiate education; I embraced what I was taught. I moved from there to a blend of the Christian academic-discipline model and then Christian vocation model. In retrospect it is clear to me that the effect of my graduate school education was the main cause of my moving away from the Christian humanist model; whereas my graduate school education trained me to “do philosophy,” as we called it in those days, the Christian humanist model seemed to be oriented entirely toward the past.<sup>51</sup>

#### Practicing Shalom in the Integration of Faith and Learning

While acknowledging the contribution and value of each of these models in Christian education, Wolterstorff finds something still lacking. He then articulates that this integration of faith and learning must lead to action. He therefore adds that there is the need for focusing this faith and learning on the comprehensive goal of practicing *shalom*. From his roots in the rich Reformed heritage with its strong desire to live and work in God’s kingdom, Wolterstorff proposes that the goal for Christian higher

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<sup>50</sup> Wolterstorff, 159-160.

<sup>51</sup> Wolterstorff, 88.

education is not only to engage and capture of the heart and mind for the kingdom but also to motivate Christians to engage and embrace the struggle for justice:

The question that then confronted me was how to acknowledge the worth and relevance of all these goals without having just a grab bag of good things on my hands. The answer I arrived at was the biblical concept of shalom holds them all together. Justice requires shalom; one cannot read the poetic and prophetic literature of the Old Testament and miss that. But when I looked carefully at how shalom was described, it seemed evident to me that culture and theory also enhance shalom; they enhance our flourishing.<sup>52</sup>

In the continuing search for clarity in the theme of shalom, Wolterstorff adds to the idea of faith and learning by asserting that faith provides a strategic role in defining the role of vocation as 'kingdom of God' territory. Wolterstorff asserts that integration of faith into learning and practice not only grounds ethics within a particular vocation, but also provides guidance in asking the deeper questions of redefining the purpose and goals for a particular vocation:

There is a great deal of discussion nowadays about medical ethics, legal ethics, business ethics, and so forth. While often participating in these discussions, the Reformed Christian will also want to bracket most of them. For most of them take for granted the present social formations of medicine, law, and business, and then worry about the ethical quandaries that arise for those who act within those formations. The Reformed Christian will want to step back ... to ask what is the purpose of business.<sup>53</sup>

What is the purpose of business? When the vision of the *missio Dei* permeates the mind of the believing scholar, the purpose of any vocation is elevated to a higher and deeper level than just defining ethical practice within a given societal setting. Not only does kingdom thinking evaluate the present state of vocations and life (providing a set of ethical guidelines) within the context of societies and cultures but seeks the more radical

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<sup>52</sup> Wolterstorff, 88.

<sup>53</sup> Wolterstorff, 273.

question for the Christian as to how a particular vocation is to be pursued, given the believer's participation in the consummating work of the Spirit of God and the in-breaking kingdom.

### **The Anabaptist and Evangelical address Scholarship and the Christian Faith**

#### Faith, Hope and Love as Contributors to the Integration of Faith and Learning

The Jacobson's in their introduction to the book they edited, *Scholarship & Christian Faith: Enlarging the Conversation*, acknowledge the seminal contributions of Holmes and Wolterstorff in shaping a working definition for Christian higher education. The motivation for their book is to critique what they consider as the strengths and deficiencies in the "Reformed position" on the integration of faith and learning and contribute new perspectives on the subject.<sup>54</sup> One of the principal criticisms of the Reformed integration model for faith and learning focuses on the perceived limitations of the word "faith." As Jacobsen says in the prologue:

On the one hand, "faith" is often a simple synonym for being Christian, as in "the Christian faith." On the other hand, faith can be seen as only one dimension of Christian being. The Apostle Paul used three words to describe the full contours of Christian identity: faith, hope, and love. Christian scholars need to pay more attention to that three-part formula—a holistic formula for wisdom—and not limit their metaphors to faith alone.<sup>55</sup>

The Jacobsens argue that by focusing exclusively on faith, while ignoring hope and love, the Reformed model effectively limits faith to its noun form, understood as defining propositions concerned with "religious beliefs about God, the world, and

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<sup>54</sup> Jacobson's criticism of the reformed position targets a more static position. My readings of Wolterstorff's writings show a dynamic evolving vision of Christian education – the latest addition that amplifies Wolterstorff's vision of Christian education moving to the praxis of "shalom".

<sup>55</sup> Jacobsen and Jacobsen, 4.

humankind, or a worldview embracing all these ideas.”<sup>56</sup> They believe that faith assertions are very important dialogues to have in the context of the academic disciplines, but not the only dialogues that need to be brought to the table. The goal of perfect integration is, of course, unobtainable but that does not defeat the continuing dialogue and movement towards that goal. The contributors to *Scholarship and Christian Faith* argue that the two major elements that need to be added to faith and learning in striving towards the goal of the integrated life are the elements of hope and love, pointing back to the Apostle Paul’s writing in 1 Corinthians 13.

While the Jacobsens imply that both Holmes and Wolterstorff have limited their dialogue only to a narrow definition of faith, a careful reading of both Holmes and Wolterstorff shows that they understand faith to include hope and love. The best example of this is Wolterstorff’s addition (discussed above) of shalom. Wolterstorff’s vision for shalom aptly brings faith together with hope and love. Faith reveals, to those who have received his grace, the vision of God at work in the world. Hope is the vision of God’s good work in the world for the benefit of all creation, and love is the force that motivates the Christian to live out a life that mirrors the future restoration of all things. The motive of shalom is to reach a state of wholeness or completeness that includes not only one individual but all of creation.

### **Saint Augustine: On Faith, Hope, and Love**

The theme of faith, hope, and love and their relation to learning and living a life of significance is a theme that Paul elaborates in 1 Corinthians 13. While many other church fathers elucidate on Paul’s comments, one of the more interesting commentaries

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<sup>56</sup> Jacobsen and Jacobsen, 4.



addressing this theme is Augustine's *Enchiridion*.<sup>57</sup> This little handbook was written by Saint Augustine in response to a letter received from a young man asking for a manual that he could carry with him as a guide to the proper worship and service to God. In its brief chapters, Augustine thoughtfully examines Christian living utilizing Paul's framework of faith, hope, and love.

Augustine proposes that true knowledge and wisdom can only be achieved through the eyes of faith. While some truth can be discovered by reason, there is knowledge and wisdom that moves beyond the "scope of the bodily senses."<sup>58</sup> Augustine succinctly sums up the nature of faith in the famous saying found in another of his writings commenting on the statement of Jesus in John 6:29: "Therefore do not seek to understand in order to believe, but believe that you may understand; since, except ye believe, you shall not understand."<sup>59</sup> Faith then rightfully interprets and provides meaning for what we observe through the senses. Augustine argues that faith is the belief in divinely inspired witnesses who composed the Scriptures "... and who by divine assistance were enabled, either through bodily sense or intellectual perception, to see or foresee the things in question."<sup>60</sup> Faith is the belief that a good God is working in the world as witnessed by Scripture and that this work is taking creation to a glorious final and complete perfection in Christ. Yet faith does not ignore the presence of both good and evil nor the dilemma the presence of evil presents to the believer. Faith sees the

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<sup>57</sup> Augustine, *The Enchiridion*, (NPNF<sup>1</sup> 3:237-276).

<sup>58</sup> Augustine, *The Enchiridion*, (NPNF<sup>1</sup> 3:238).

<sup>59</sup> Augustine, *On the Gosple of St. John* 29.7, (NPNF<sup>1</sup> 7:184).

<sup>60</sup> Augustine, *The Enchiridion*, (NPNF<sup>1</sup> 3:238).

world as it is and yet looks beyond the world as it is utilizing what God has spoken concerning his nature and the nature of creation and trusts God to complete his promises.

While faith requires a belief in both an explanation for the good and the bad, Hope focuses only on the future good that is coming. Faith believes in the work that God reveals has been done and will be done in creation. Hope envisions that good end of God's intent and work will look like (distorted as it may be through the eyes of humans scarred by sin) and motivates the believer to live in the present just as she/he will live in the future fully realized reign of Christ Jesus.

Augustine adds his voice to Paul's witness that faith and hope are fully realized in the life of the believer when the love of Christ becomes the center of the life of the believer. Faith and hope, based on the work of God, becomes the vehicle for the believer to accept being loved and in turn loving God, humans, and all of creation. Love means participating in the consummative work of the Spirit. Love motivates the believer to action both on the behalf of God (worship) and on behalf of creation (service to God for the good). Augustine writes: "Now this is the true faith of Christ which the apostle speaks of, 'which worketh by love;' and if there is anything that it does not yet embrace in its love, asks that it may receive, seeks that it may find, and knocks that it may be opened unto it."<sup>61</sup>

The pursuit of and participation in the advancement of knowledge for the Christian scholar can only be complete, when faith in God's revelation speaks knowledge beyond the ability of human observation, hope (through faith) envisions God's good

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<sup>61</sup> Augustine, *The Enchiridion*, (NPNF<sup>1</sup> 3:237-276).

work (and our participation through His gifting) in bringing about the restoration of all things, and love of God and creation motivates the heart.

The distinguished Christian educator Parker Palmer comments concerning the motive of love as a fundamental driving force for the integration of faith and knowledge in his book *To Know As We Are Known: Education As a Spiritual Journey*.<sup>62</sup> Palmer considers that any serious Christian scholarship originates from a profound love for God and God's good creation. Palmer writes: "The deepest wellspring of our desire to know is the passion to recreate the organic community in which the world was first created."<sup>63</sup> Later in the book, as he continues to elaborate on the theme of love and the application of knowledge he writes: "... arising from love is the reunification and reconstruction of broken selves and the worlds."<sup>64</sup> The incarnational work of Jesus was the revealing of God to the world and the work of reconciliation and transformation that God is about in creation is also the work into which all believers are invited to participate.

### **William Dyrness – Spiritual Formation Shapes the Integration of Faith and Learning**

Faith, hope, and, love then become the driving forces in the Christian scholar's endeavors. Practically speaking, however, what means can Christian higher education utilize to assist in the formation of a lifelong quest for true integration in faith and learning? William A. Dyrness suggests that theological reflection in the context of Christian education "is the dynamic interaction between a prayerful listening to Scripture

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<sup>62</sup> J. Palmer Parker, *To Know As We Are Known: Education As a Spiritual Journey* (San Francisco: Harper, 1993).

<sup>63</sup> Parker, 8.

<sup>64</sup> Parker, 14.

and a responsible involvement with the issues of our world that has as its goal a maturity of Christlikeness.”<sup>65</sup> Dyrness proposes that ultimately the overriding goal of integration of faith (and its implied application of theology) and learning should ultimately be focused on spiritual formation.

As a starting place for practicing Christian theology in the academy, Dyrness refers back to Martin Luther’s use of *oratio*, *meditatio*, and *tentatio* (prayer, meditation, and testing). *Oratio* initiates the activity because “theological studies presuppose an environment of faith and prayer.”<sup>66</sup> Prayer implores the Holy Spirit for understanding of what God has already provided and expresses to God the responding love to the love from God that we have already received.<sup>67</sup>

*Meditatio* follows prayer as the discipline of attaining “theological aptitude” as we carefully listen and submit to God’s word. “Continually hearing and submitting to Scripture is the heart and core of a trustful response to God.”<sup>68</sup> The work of scripture is to speak to us and provide new insights as to the nature of the world and our purpose in it. It also confronts our actions and makes us responsible human beings. “By the working of

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<sup>65</sup> William A. Dyrness, “The Contributions of Theological Studies to the Christian Liberal Arts,” in *Making Higher Education Christian: The History and Mission of Evangelical Colleges in America*, 172-186 (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987), 175.

<sup>66</sup> Dyrness, 176.

<sup>67</sup> John Webster’s comments addressing Karl Barth’s understanding of prayer are insightful here. Barth understands prayer to be the defining source and guide for human moral action because it is an action completely caught up in the work and word of God. Prayer rejects the idea that there is any legitimate human moral creativity derived from any metaphysical or anthropological qualities arising solely from the human will. Prayer is our appeal to God that orients our actions. Prayer moves us beyond standing upon a secure but static foundation and brings us into a flow of interactive dialogue between a Father and his children. The Father wills relations with His children. In prayer, the children seek what the Father wills and the children respond to the desires of the Father. “What he wills with and for these children is therefore... living dealings between himself and them... They too have to enter into these dealings on their side. They have to actualize the partnership in this history.” John Webster. *Karl Barth*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Cromwell Press Ltd., 2004), 159.

<sup>68</sup> Dyrness, 176

the Holy Spirit, the whole process leads us individually and communally to a maturity of life and thought that the New Testament calls Christlikeness.”<sup>69</sup>

The third quality *tentatio* implies that theology always takes shape within the social and historical context in which we live. The unfolding of scripture always rises from within the context of history and the suffering of daily life. It is here, in the finiteness and suffering, that we experience the goodness and truthfulness of God’s Word. Dyrness proposes that it is in *tentatio*, through the experience and agony of life, that “... theological studies provide the greatest challenge and allow the largest scope to the arts and sciences: theological understanding takes place only within the grid of life itself.”<sup>70</sup>

Dyrness elaborates three ways in which Christian theology needs to infuse the arts and sciences. First, Christian theology supplies the source and the ground for all that exists. But the ultimate goal of theology is not the gaining of more knowledge through research and scholarship but Christ-like formation for both the individual and community. The goal is not to be more informed but to mature and learn so as to submit to transformation through the working of the Spirit. This submission to the Spirit in turn leads the Christian to embrace a sense of responsibility to work within the kingdom of God by addressing human sin and suffering. It also brings us to the larger panorama of the work of God and his people on behalf of creation.

Second, theological reflection infuses the study of the art and sciences through the search for and participation in God’s realization of a redeemed and perfected creation:

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<sup>69</sup> Dyrness, 175.

<sup>70</sup> Dyrness, 176.

Reality is a dynamic project that God - its personal source - has initiated and in which humanity is inevitably involved.... The fundamental theological conviction one should bring to study in the arts and sciences is that the ultimate shape of things is God's project of wooing a fallen order back to its original purpose to glorify and reflect him. This discovery demands an active response, a mission: we must make God's task our task; we too must be involved with God's purpose to redeem the world and thus glorify him.<sup>71</sup>

Ultimately for the Christian, the understanding of redemption and ongoing transformation in the world centers on the incarnation of Christ that in turn determines how we perceive and participate in education, research, and apply vocation in the world. Dyrness refers to Teilhard de Chardin and Thomas F. Torrance as examples of scholars/theologians who have addressed the importance of the contribution arising from a Christian worldview that engages scientific theory.

Third, the final contribution of theology to arts and science addresses the consummative work of God in the Second Coming. Instead of a hopeless and inconclusive future, Christian theology sustains and shapes hope: "Christian convictions about creation and redemption make the world open to its transcendent purpose and to the future that God has planned for it. Through his Spirit, God has revealed to us 'what no eye has seen, or ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived...' (1 Corinthians 2:9)."<sup>72</sup> Christian hope gives direction and sustains perseverance; it allows the pursuit of vocation even in the darkest moment or the most perplexing obstacles.

Christian hope is a narrative that is very attractive even to many non-Christians. Leslie Newbigin refers to one of his Hindu friend's observations of the Christian vision and hope as revealed in scripture:

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<sup>71</sup> Dyrness, 179.

<sup>72</sup> Dyrness, 182.

My Hindu friend saw in the Bible a unique vision of universal history and the place of the human person as a responsible actor in history. The two belong together. You cannot have hopeful and responsible action without some vision of a possible future. To put it in another way, if there is no point in the story as a whole, there is no point in my own action. If the story is meaningless, any action of mine is meaningless. The loss of a vision for the future necessarily produces that typical phenomenon of our society that the sociologists call anomie, a state in which publicly accepted norms and values have disappeared.<sup>73</sup>

### Summary

The history of Christian higher education in America is a fascinating story of the efforts of Christian men and women to frame the Christian faith in the language of the enlightenment and modernism. There is much to learn from our historical ancestry both from their accomplishments but maybe even more so by examining their frailties. The framing and defense of the Gospel in terms of the enlightenment and modern era set Christian education on course to build a massive foundational structure that is more philosophically framed theism with a Christian veneer. The shift from the modern era to a yet to be completely understood postmodern era exposed the modern Christian foundation and undermined its relevancy. Developments in postmodern thought can be useful in navigating back to a genuinely Christian perspective.

First, the postmodern rejection of the presumptive Enlightenment rational approach to discovering ultimate truth and the debunking of foundationalism provide the opportunity for what Grenz calls a “chastened rationality.”<sup>74</sup> Too much emphasis has been placed on the ability of reason founded on the scientific method to build the foundation for Christian faith, leading to a comfortable intellectual certitude.

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<sup>73</sup> Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 91.

<sup>74</sup> Stanley J. Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub., 1996), 169-171.

Second, while postmodernism goes to the extreme of rejecting the existence of any kind of universal metanarrative or the possibility of truth beyond a locally interpreted version of reality, it also challenges evangelicals to question their submission to a humanistic rationalism as a legitimate Christian pursuit of God. This questioning of epistemological presumptions allows disciples to, once again, focus on the biblical witness to the *missio Dei* as initiated by the Father, revealed in Jesus Christ, and consummated in the Holy Spirit.

Third, while Christian believers reject the belief that a metanarrative does not exist, the current climate opens the door for a genuine dialogue with a pluralistic world that is neither an overly triumphal or defensive mode of fighting for survival. Christians acting on faith, living in hope, and motivated by love have the opportunity to convincingly advocate for the centrality of the gospel as a particular narrative with universal significance. Christians speak from faith but they know that all the other competing narratives out there are also ultimately narratives based on faith – be they atheistic, philosophical, or religious in nature. The *missio Dei* revealed in scripture is a powerfully moving narrative that is truth powerfully revealed when incarnated in the testimony of faith, lived in hope, and motivated by love.

Fourth, the hallmark of the enlightenment and modernity was the elevation of the self-determined individual driven by a consumerist mentality. Christians must confess that we too have been captives of our Western culture. Communitarians within the postmodern movement point out that the community or social networks in which we all participate are crucial to the formation of identity and shape the guiding narrative that include traditions of virtue, moral behavior for the common good, and ultimate



meaning.<sup>75</sup> The primary center for faith is communal. This in no way detracts from the necessity of the personal ownership of faith but a personal faith is by its very nature shaped and sustained by participation in community. Christian higher education must witness to both students and faculty the integrative metanarrative of the Triune God revealed in the historical narrative *missio Dei*. Hence the necessity for the training of college students in the environment of a faith forming community that practices prayer, meditation, and testing as part disciplines for the integration of faith and learning in Christian higher education.

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<sup>75</sup> Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism*, 168.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **CONCERNS IN DESIGNING THE CAPSTONE COURSE**

As mentioned earlier, when higher education began in America, the capstone course was viewed as a valuable tool for integrating faith and learning. This was no longer the case as the shift in education moved from training the whole person to the focused preparation of the professional. Many administrators and educators discarded the belief that the Christian faith had any relevancy within the modern university. Even those institutions remaining dedicated to providing a Christian education largely abandoned the idea of a capstone course for the integration of faith and learning. Bible classes were still taught, but as Wolterstorff mentions, Bible and theology classes were either taught serving ministerial students planning to accept positions within the church or taught as supplemental Bible classes that non-ministry students were required to take in order to graduate. Again, these classes usually approached faith by providing an awareness of facts and knowledge designed to either affirm or defend the Christian faith. What is apparent in this review of Christian higher education is the need for a paradigm shift from the apologetic foundational approach of the modern era.

The earlier literary reviews on the social Trinity and theological anthropology propose a Trinitarian based paradigm emphasizing the scriptural narrative of the *missio Dei* as the next paradigm for Christian higher education. While it might be desirable to approach this shift in Christian education through a radical and abrupt change initiated at all levels of the Christian university, it is not a very feasible approach. A more feasible approach is an incremental approach starting with implementation of a senior year capstone course. In the last thirty years, both Christian and non-Christian educators alike

have returned to the need for a senior year capstone course that integrates the college learning experience.

Robert Durel in his journal article, "The Capstone Course: A Rite of Passage" defines the objective of the capstone course as being the point where the students integrate the knowledge and experiences of the undergraduate curriculum and move to adult contributors in society:

The capstone course typically is defined as a crowning course or experience coming at the end of a sequence of courses with the specific objective of integrating a body of relatively fragmented knowledge into a unified whole. As a rite of passage, this course provides an experience through which undergraduate students both look back over their undergraduate curriculum in an effort to make sense of that experience and look forward to a life by building on that experience. In the capstone course students disengage (i.e. separate) from undergraduate status and existential condition and reemerge (i.e. incorporate) as graduates prepared to assess critically and act responsibly in civil society. Thus, the capstone course provides the liminal threshold at which students change their status.<sup>1</sup>

My proposal is to develop the capstone course for the Christian university by approaching the curriculum through the practice of faith, hope, and love grounded in a Trinitarian theology, thus providing a unified perspective that leads to meaningful vocation and service in civil society. There is the obvious need to transform Christian students from consumers of information into thinkers and integrators - of faith and learning. The vision for significance involves not only the exercise of faith, hope and love but also the practices within the believing learning community of discipleship through prayer, meditation, and testing. This process will lead to a life of significance that Wolterstorff refers to as the practice of shalom. Missional living draws its energy from the narrative of God, kingdom, and eschatology and then is applied within the practices

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<sup>1</sup> Robert J. Durel, "The Capstone Course: A Rite of Passage," *American Sociological Association*, July 1993, 223-225.

of a living community grappling with life and vocation. But the transformative struggle both for the person and the faith community is shaped and sustained through prayer, meditation, and testing. The development of a capstone course curriculum incorporating the Trinitarian narrative and the practice of spiritual disciplines as a process of discovery in vocation and gifting is a good first step in addressing the need for change.

### **Best Practices in Capstone Courses Currently Used in Higher Education**

Surprisingly, the revival of the use of capstone courses began to show up as the topic for discussion in secular education. Two groups of influential educators proposed capstone courses concerned with the large numbers of students who were graduating from universities with great technical skills but who lacked any preparation for addressing the deeper questions of life and vocation.<sup>2</sup> This concern was best articulated in the landmark study led by Ernest Boyer<sup>3</sup> addressing the most critical needs in American higher education. Boyer asks two extremely important questions that reach to the heart of education:

Education for what purpose? Competence to what end? At a time in life when values should be shaped and personal priorities sharply probed, what a tragedy it would be if the most deeply felt issues, the most haunting questions, the most creative moments were pushed to the fringes of our institutional life. What a monumental mistake it would be if students, during the undergraduate years, remained trapped within the organizational grooves and narrow routines to which the academic world sometimes seems excessively devoted.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Robert N. Bellha, Richard Madsen, William M. Sullivan, Ann Swindler and Steven M. Tipton, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley: University of California, 1985); Ernest L. Boyer, *College: The Undergraduate Experience in America* (New York: Harper & Row, 1987).

<sup>3</sup> Ernest Boyer was considered by many to be one of the greatest teachers in America in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Douglas Jacobsen and Linda Husted Jacobsen, *Scholarship and Christian Faith* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 48.

<sup>4</sup> Ernest Boyer, *College: The Undergraduate Experience in America* (New York: Harper and Row, 1987) 283.

Steven Garber observes that Boyer's questions are critical to education because they are a conversation about meaning itself and if left unanswered, education itself becomes an exercise in futility. To drive home his point, Garber notes the loss of the integral connection between the University of Pittsburgh and its' founding motto "*veritas et virtus*" (truth and virtue) that envisioned the formation of moral meaning as the heart of learning. Garber laments that the Latin saying is now an attractive marketing emblem for sweatshirts but no longer encapsulates the purpose and goals of the university. Garber writes:

The shriveled visions of universities under the impact of modernity – particularly the effects of bureaucracy and technology – seem more concerned to produce people who are technically competent but who have little interest in the whys and wherefores of their competencies.<sup>5</sup>

Garber argues that education should encourage in the student a calling and passion for living life and not just training in vocation. He says that it is not enough for universities only to train for proficiency and success in a profession without addressing the need to live a life of significance.<sup>6</sup>

The ethical and moral failures within the professional world witnessed throughout the last half of the twentieth century and continuing into the first decade of the twenty-first century caused many non-Christian universities to pay attention to commissions like the one Boyer chaired. The desire of these alarmed educators was to inaugurate an 'enriched major' that not only produced young adults with in-depth technical skills (as expected by any vocation), but equally emphasized and addressed the significance of that

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<sup>5</sup> Steven Garber, *The Fabric of Faithfulness: Weaving Together Belief & Behavior During the University Years* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1996), 89.

<sup>6</sup> Garber, 75.

vocation as an essential contribution to society when performed ethically with passion, purpose.<sup>7</sup> Boyer framed the concept of an enriched major in terms of asking three essential questions: First, what is the history and tradition of the field to be examined? Second, what are the social and economic implications to be understood? And third, what are the ethical and moral issues to be confronted?<sup>8</sup>

Starting in the early seventies, a study sponsored by the *Carnegie Council on Policy Studies in Higher Education* researched 270 university and college catalogs within the United States and found that only 3 percent of the institutions provided some sort of senior year seminar.<sup>9</sup> In a second review in the nineties, Joseph Cuseo surveyed four national conferences on the Senior Year Experience and two Conferences on Students in Transition examining the goals and structure of programs for students in their senior year that included capstone courses. In that survey, what becomes obvious from the national conferences on this subject, is the increasing attention universities are giving to the senior year experience and capstone courses. Cuseo's examination resulted in the comprehensive goals outlined in Table 5.1.

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<sup>7</sup> Garber, 109-110.

<sup>8</sup> Garber, 109.

<sup>9</sup> Jean M. Henscheid and Lisa R. Barnicoat, "Capstone Courses in Higher Education," *Encyclopedia of Higher Education*, 2010-18-June, <http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1G23403200093.html> (accessed August 16, 2010).

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**Table 5:1 Comprehensive Goals of a Successful Senior Year Experience**

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1. Promotion of the coherence and relevance of general education;
  2. Promotion of integration and connections between general education and the academic major;
  3. Fostering of integration and synthesis within the academic major;
  4. Promotion of meaningful connections between the academic major and work and career experiences;
  5. Explicit and intentional development of important student skills, competencies, and perspectives that are tacitly or incidentally developed in the college curriculum;
  6. Enhanced awareness of and support for the key personal adjustments encountered by seniors during their transition from college to post-college life;
  7. Improvement of seniors' career preparation and pre-professional development, that is, facilitation of the transition from the academic to the professional world;
  8. Enhancement of seniors' preparation and prospects for postgraduate education;
  9. Promotion of effective life planning and decision making with respect to practical issues likely to be encountered in adult life after college (for example, financial planning, marriage, family planning).
  10. Encouraging a sense of unity and community, among the participants, that will later provide alumni networking and alumni support for the college.<sup>10</sup>
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Subsequent reviews and surveys in 2000 focusing on senior year seminars and capstone courses showed that these courses are mostly organized and associated with specific academic disciplines as opposed to interdisciplinary seminars and courses.<sup>11</sup> The more specific goals addressing the desired outcome of skills for the senior year program are listed in the *Michigan Professional Preparation Network Report*.<sup>12</sup> The report listed

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<sup>10</sup> John N. Gardner, Gretchen Van der Veer and Associates, *The Senior Year Experience: Facilitating Integration, Reflection, Closure, and Transition* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1998), 22.

<sup>11</sup> Jean M Henscheid, *National Survey of Senior Seminars/Capstone Courses*, August 1999, <http://www.sc.edu/fye/research/surveyfindings/surveys/surveyor.html> (accessed December 10, 2010).

<sup>12</sup> Robert O. Blanchard and William G. Christ, *Media Education and the Liberal Arts: A Blueprint for a New Professionalism* (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Earlbaum Associates Pub., 1993), 15-16.

ten evaluative goals that, if met, provide a unifying structure for examining learning in the student's major course of study and their educational experience in general.

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**Table 5.2 Ten Outcomes Listed by the Michigan Report**

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1. *Communication competence* is the ability to read, write, speak, and listen and to use these processes effectively to acquire, develop, and convey ideas and information.
  2. *Critical thinking* is the ability to examine issues rationally, logically, and coherently.
  3. *Contextual competence* is an understanding of the societal context or environment in which one is living and working.
  4. *Aesthetic sensibility* is an enhanced aesthetic awareness of arts and human behavior for both personal enrichment and application in the enhancement of work.
  5. *Professional identity* is a concern for improving the knowledge, skills, and values of the profession.
  6. *Professional ethics* is an understanding of the ethics of a profession as standards that guide professional behavior.
  7. *Adaptive competence* is anticipating, adapting to, and promoting changes important to a profession's societal purpose and the professional's role.
  8. *Leadership capacity* is exhibiting the capacity to contribute as a productive member of the profession and assuming appropriate leadership roles.
  9. *Scholarly concern for improvement* is recognizing the need to increase knowledge and to advance the profession through both theoretical and applied research.
  10. *Motivation of continued learning* is exploring and expanding personal, civic, and professional knowledge and skills through a lifetime.<sup>13</sup>
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Robert Moore lists the recommendations from the Michigan report and then indicates how each of these outcomes can address one or more of the modalities of learning in Table 5.3.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Blanchard and Christ, 15-16.

<sup>14</sup> Robert C. Moore, "The Capstone Course," *etown.edu*, 2005. 4-6, <http://users.etown.edu/m/moorerc/capstone.html> (accessed 2010 6-July), 5.



**Table 5.3 Integrating Expected Outcomes with the Modalities of Learning**

Learning	Cognitive Learning	Affective Learning	Psychomotor
Communication Competence	x		x
Critical Thinking	x	x	
Contextual Competence	x	x	
Aesthetic Sensitivity		x	
Professional Ethics		x	
Adaptive Competence		x	x
Leadership Capacity			
Scholarly Concern for Improvement	x		
Motivation for Continued Learning	x		

Identifying the modalities of learning is useful in determining the kinds of activities that will enhance and integrate the learning activities and speaks to the design of the capstone course.

Jerrold Kemp succinctly summarizes the respective forms of learning in Table 5:4.

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**Table 5.4 The Cognitive, Affective, and Psychomotor Domain of Learning**

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**The Cognitive domain includes the following intellectual activity**

1. Knowledge – recalling information.
2. Comprehension – interpreting information.
3. Application – applying information.
4. Analysis – breaking information into parts.
5. Synthesis – bringing together elements of information to form a new whole.
6. Evaluation – making judgments against agreed criteria.

**The Affective domain exhibiting attitudes, interests, and/or personal involvement**

1. Receiving – attracting the learner's attention.
2. Responding – learner willing to reply or take action.
3. Valuing – committing oneself to take an attitudinal position.
4. Organizing – making adjustments or decisions from among several alternatives.
5. Characterization of a value complex – integrating one's beliefs, ideas, and attitudes into a total philosophy.

**The Psychomotor mode of learning involves six classes of skilled movements**

1. Gross body movements – arms, shoulders, feet, and legs.
2. Finely coordinated movements – hand and fingers; hand and eye; hand and ear; hand, eye, and foot.
3. Nonverbal communication – facial expression, gestures, bodily movements.
4. Speech behaviors – sound production and projection, sound-gesture coordination.<sup>15</sup>

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The best practices survey for capstone courses provides a good structure for developing the curriculum for the capstone course designed to integrate faith and learning. The above lists will provide the model for developing Goals – desired outcome – and specific exercises addressing the different modalities of learning.

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<sup>15</sup> Jerrold E. Kemp and Don C. Smellie, *Planning, Producing, and Using Instructional Technologies*, Seventh Edition (New York: Harper Collins College Publishers, 1994), 16.

## CONCLUSION

A young man requested from Augustine a simple handbook of wisdom to guide his Christian life. In his reply to the young man Augustine picks up the themes of faith, hope and love from 1 Corinthians 13. He advises the young man that faith shapes and instructs knowledge, hope gives direction, and love shapes the Christian life.<sup>1</sup> Our theology, as James K.A. Smith tells us, is what we love and pursue. What shapes the desires of our heart, shape our habits and practices and captivates our minds. Ultimately there are a lot of competing theologies all around us. I do not believe that this is anything new, the desires that control our loves and affections have and will be an ongoing defining spiritual battle until Christ returns. The assertion of this thesis has been that the right theology about God as revealed in the work and revelation of the Trinity will only be found first in experiencing Jesus who reveals the Father who in turn empowers us with the Spirit. Ironically this is nothing new, it is called discipleship when faith in Christ places us in communion with the Triune God and then places us on the path of transformation into what we are becoming as sons and daughters of the Father.

In examining the modalities of learning, three types of learning are identified. Cognitive, Affective, and Psychomotor learning intertwine to encourage the desired results in young adult learners. The perspective of prayer, meditation, and testing or experiencing life gleaned from Dyrness and Martin Luther, speaks to the desired result for the design of the theological infusion into the capstone course for seniors pursuing a double major. Thinking in these terms, I have chosen the format of 'Backward Design' to

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<sup>1</sup> Augustine, *The Enchiridion*, Vol. 3, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers. Series 1*, ed. Philip Schaff. 1886-1889 (Repr. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1994).

visualize and describe the desired content for infusing Trinitarian Theology as the matrix for learning within the capstone course.

#### Backward Design – Desired Results and Determining Acceptable Evidence

*Understanding by Design*, developed by Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe<sup>2</sup>

provides a structure that works from the desired end result back. In this unit-planning model, teachers are asked to envision the desired outcomes and then work backwards to design learning activities that will support the desired outcome. This planning model encourages teachers to design learning activities that synergistically complement each other, build critical thinking skills, and implements responses and helpful habits that will serve the student throughout their adult life. The following guidelines for the Inward – Upward – Outward spiritual formation that will address the Spiritual progress of the Capstone course will compliment the learning guides developed in conjunction with a mentor professor from each student's vocational emphasis.

The curriculum content is divided into three parts as mentioned above: Upward – Inward – and Outward movements. Each of these movements is divided into four sections for a total of twelve desired results shaped by knowing and experiencing Trinity. This theological teaching and practice is to encourage the student to discover the Triune God, apply that knowledge through the development of the spiritual practices, and imagine how this faith shapes and will continue to transform the students life. The emphasis in the capstone course will focus on the preparation and practice of vocation (i.e. taking into account the student's career preparation for the last 3 ½ years). The desired results start

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<sup>2</sup> Adapted from Grant & McTighe, Jay Wiggins, *Understanding by Design: Backwards Design Process*, University of Missouri, January 19, 2009, <http://www.digitalliteracy.mwg.org/documents/template.pdf> (accessed November 14, 2011).

with addressing the student's knowledge and relationship in *Life with God: Upward Movement*. The first four goals in this upward movement seek to encourage a deep abiding life long relationship with the Father. This relationship is supported through emphasis on discipleship by following the Son and the discovery or reinforcement of the spiritual disciplines and the seeking for the leading of the Spirit.

The Inward Movement addresses the student's life in community with others. Here the emphasis is on shaping the students understanding and practice of community life together as disciples of Christ with an emphasis on the practice of loving the church as God loves us. Exploration of a Trinitarian based theological anthropology is the basis for examining personhood in relation to the community of faith. In this section the student will be directed to think about Christian personhood and individual giftedness as it relates to the church. The students will explore the Christian community and the life of social imagination together that invites and surrenders to the work of the Holy Spirit in transforming the person and the community of faith into the likeness of Christ. An additional emphasis will focus on marriage or life of a single adult as seen through the lens of a Trinitarian based anthropology.





The third unit of desired results explores the movement outward participating in the mission of God. In this series, the student is encouraged to embrace the *missio Dei* as a lifelong passion of loving and treasuring what the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit passionately love and are working to consummate in the second coming of Jesus. This section explores a kingdom vision of vocation that imagines both individual and communal participation in the redemptive and consummative work of Trinity in the world. This section explores not only the Christian's relationship with others outside of

the believing community but also the Christian's participation in the redemption and restoration of all of creation in the role of priests and stewards.





Appendix B: Determining Acceptable Evidence addresses some of the assessment parameters that would indicate the student achievement of the desired outcomes for each unit. The Upward, Inward, and Outward are to be evaluated through some activities encompassing all three movements: 1. Group worship time centering on each of the three movements. 2. Group projects, activities and discussions. 3. Sectional exams utilizing short essays that demonstrate the level of comprehension achieved in each movement. 4. The student will be required to write a weekly reflection journal throughout the course.

Specific activities unique to each of the movements include the following activities: 1. For the Upward movement there will be a student directed spiritual retreat that focuses on Trinitarian worship and the spiritual disciplines. 2. For the Inward movement, the students will do individual and group work addressing the past through the exploration of genograms and a re-imagining of each students future. 3. As a compliment to the Outward movement, each student will be assigned a Christian mentor who has a vocation similar to what the student is pursuing.

## APPENDIX A: DESIRED RESULTS





Desired Results – Life with God: Upward Movement – Lesson goal 1	
What resulting action would you like for the student?	What are the critical essential questions you would like the student to ask?
<p>Leaving Lipscomb, the student has developed a deep abiding life long relationship with the Father through Christ in the Holy Spirit.</p> <p>The student has a well-understood lifelong devotion to loving God and loving their neighbor.</p>	<p>What is the revealed nature of God in scripture?</p> <p>Who is God and why does that make a difference in my life?</p> <p>How am I to understand who I am and why I am here on this earth?</p> <p>Who is my neighbor?</p>
 	 
What will the student understand as a result of this class?	What critical and session questions will focus this unit?
<p>The revealed nature of God and the student's relationship with the Triune God.</p> <p>God is always present, he loves us in the work and expression of the Father, Son and Spirit and desires relationship with us.</p> <p>The nature of God teaches us how to love and whom to love.</p>	<p>What is the nature and work of God?</p> <p>Why are the first two commandments connected?</p> <p>What is the nature of God's relationship with all of creation?</p>

Desired Result – Experiencing the Son – Upward Movement – Lesson goal 2





What resulting action would you like for the student?	What are the critical essential questions you would like the student to ask?
To ensure the student leaving Lipscomb is a disciple of the Son.	<p>What does scripture reveal about the nature and work of the Son?</p> <p>How does the Son reveal the authentic nature of the Father?</p> <p>What is my relationship to the Son?</p> <p>How does the Son's relationship with the Father affect me?</p>
 	 
What will the student understand as a result of this class?	What critical and session questions will focus this unit?
<p>It is through the Son that we are known and loved by the Father.</p> <p>The Father sent his only begotten Son to the world for love's sake.</p> <p>It is only through the Son that we are adopted as sons and daughters by the Father.</p> <p>The death of the Son is for our sake.</p> <p>The resurrection is our secure promise of an eternal future.</p>	<p>What words and ideas were redefined by the life and ministry of Jesus?</p> <p>What does it mean "To know Jesus is to know the Father?"</p> <p>How does "knowing Jesus" help us grow into our personhood and participate in communion with the believing community?</p>







Desired Results – Communion with the Spirit – Upward Movement – Lesson Goal 3

What resulting action would you like for the student?	What are the critical essential questions you would like the student to ask?
<p>Upon graduation, the student will incorporate into his/her life a discipleship that emphasizes the spiritual disciplines and the leading of the Spirit.</p> <p>To accomplish this goal, special emphasis will be placed on the student's interaction with scripture through prayer, meditation, and testing.</p>	<p>How near/present is God to me?</p> <p>How does the Spirit work in my life, in the life of the community where God has placed me, and in the lives of my neighbors?</p> <p>How do I invite the Spirit to work and guide me in my life and ministry?</p>
 	 
What will the student understand as a result of this class?	What critical and session questions will focus this unit?
<p>The work of the Spirit is to empower, counsel, guide the individual believer and community to embrace the passionate life and mission of the Trinity.</p> <p>That the student will experience community as God intends it to be. That he/she will know that they are never left isolated and alone but are invited and empowered to live life as the "new humanity" in communion with God, humanity, and nature.</p> <p>The life of the student is bound up in relationship with God, scripture, the Christian community, and the mission of God in the world.</p>	<p>How does the Holy Spirit work in my life and in the life of my community?</p> <p>What are the spiritual practices that open us to fully deepen our life in the Spirit as a disciple of Jesus?</p> <p>How can we seek the leading of the Holy Spirit?</p>





Desired Results – Love and Honor the Father – Upward Movement – Lesson Goal 4

What resulting action would you like for the student?	What are the critical essential questions you would like the student to ask?
The graduating student may love and honor the Father throughout their life by ministry and worship.	<p>What is the revealed nature of the Father?</p> <p>How does the revealed nature of the Father shape the way I live my life and the communities in which I have my identity?</p> <p>In what way does the Father sending the Son shape my life in sent community?</p>
 	 
What will the student understand as a result of this class?	What critical and session questions will focus this unit?
<p>The Father is the source of all love and goodness.</p> <p>The Father emptied himself embracing sacrifice of what is most precious in order to bring all creation into a perfect union with the Godself.</p>	<p>How does the revealed nature of the Father contrast with what I thought about God previously?</p> <p>How does a body of disciples emulate the nature of the Father?</p>





Desired Results – To Love as we are Loved – Movement Inward – Lesson goal 5

What resulting action would you like for the student?	What are the critical essential questions you would like the student to ask?
I want the student to live a passionate life that flows from God's abundant and overflowing love.	How does living good and true theology shape and guide our life? What are the manifestations of the love of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit? Being God's people on earth, how do we participate with God in blessings both neighbor and creation? What does it mean to suffer for the benefit of the other/others?
 	 
What will the student understand as a result of this class?	What critical and session questions will focus this unit?
<p>We love out of abundance because God first loved us?</p> <p>What does it mean to bless all the nations?</p> <p>How do disciples of Jesus share God with others?</p> <p>What is the cost of sharing God with others?</p>	<p>Why is love so important to human flourishing?</p> <p>What is the difference between the love of God and the way we love?</p> <p>What does it mean to love each other as Jesus has loved us?</p> <p>What is it we hope to accomplish in sharing the story of God and creation with others?</p>





Desired Results – Personhood – Becoming Fully Human – Movement Inward – LG 6

What resulting action would you like for the student?	What are the critical essential questions you would like the student to ask?
Having a deeper understanding of the Triune God and life in a community of disciples, I want the student to define her/his personhood from the perspective of a well understood Theological anthropology.	<p>If we are made in the image of God – What does that mean for life lived out in a community of disciples following Jesus?</p> <p>Each one of us finds our identity within our culture, our family, our friends, even our enemies... How does ultimately defining our identity with our relationship of God shape the way we perceive our own self? How does it transform our behavior?</p>
 	 
What will the student understand as a result of this class?	What critical and session questions will focus this unit?
<p>That God has created us as unique persons and through the Son and the power of the Spirit, our personhood (particularity) will exist throughout eternity.</p> <p>We are defined by our relationship with the Father- Son – Holy Spirit that liberated us from our aloneness, brokenness, and death.</p> <p>I hope the student will begin a life of social imagination drawing from God and the Christian community leading to transformation in Christ.</p>	<p>Now that some of the personhood of the Trinity has been revealed to me, what does that tell me about me and my relationship with God, others, and the physical world?</p> <p>What can my life look like as I become transformed by the Spirit into the likeness of Christ and the love of the Father?</p>





Desired Results – Life in Communion – Movement Inward – Lesson Goal 7

What resulting action would you like for the student?	What are the critical essential questions you would like the student to ask?
Upon graduation the student is committed to live and fully participate in a community that practices discipleship and acknowledges Jesus as Lord.	<p>Why should I be committed to live within a community of faith?</p> <p>What is my role in that commitment?</p> <p>Why is this important?</p> <p>What does a community of faith have to do with God?</p> <p>Is it possible to be someone who is committed to a discipleship with Christ yet not belong to a Christ following community?</p>
 	 
What will the student understand as a result of this class?	What critical and session questions will focus this unit?
<p>The church is the living body of Christ to testify and live out the kingdom of God in this world.</p> <p>The church participates with the Triune God in the consummative process preparing for the return of Jesus.</p> <p>The church participates in the fellowship of Trinity through the love of the Father, the redemption of the Son, and life in the Spirit.</p> <p>The church emulates that community of relationships in the world.</p> <p>Christ is God's incarnation and the Spirit is God's in-breaking of God's transforming love and mercy into the world.</p> <p>The church is flesh becoming in-Spirited and mirroring the likeness of God in the world.</p>	<p>What is the new humanity's role in the consummative work of the Holy Spirit?</p> <p>What is my place in the church and how does that fit into the kingdom of God.</p> <p>Why is community so important?</p> <p>Why is accepting the lordship of Jesus tied to living and being in a discipleship community?</p>





Desired Results – Experiencing Community through Marriage – Lesson Goal 8

What resulting action would you like for the student?	What are the critical essential questions you would like the student to ask?
Prepare the student for marriage and family or as a single who is fully participating in the community of God.	How does a Trinitarian model shape my life and my closest relationships?
 	 
What will the student understand as a result of this class?	What critical and session questions will focus this unit?
<p>God expects us to craft our character to be like the Trinity's own.</p> <p>The model for marriage is the nature of the Triune relationship.</p> <p>Reciprocal deference, self-surrender, and self-giving love is the matrix of communion in marriage just as it is the matrix of communion within the Godhead.</p> <p>Marriage teaches within the context of intimacy how to pour out self for the sake of the other.</p>	<p>Imagine what marriage might look like based upon the nature of the Trinitarian relationship.</p> <p>What does the "covenant" of marriage look like when it is a union of not just two (a man and a woman) but a covenant of three (a man, a woman, and God)?</p> <p>What does reciprocal deference look like in marriage?</p> <p>How might each person in a marriage "glorify" the other and thereby glorify God?</p>

Desired Results – Participating in the Missio Dei – Movement Outward -Lesson Goal 9





What resulting action would you like for the student?	What are the critical essential questions you would like the student to ask?
I would like the student to embrace the missio Dei as a life long passion for themselves and the community in which they find themselves.	How does the work of the Godhead in history show us the purpose and nature of our mission and passion in the kingdom?
 	 
What will the student understand as a result of this class?	What critical and session questions will focus this unit?
They have discovered the passion of God for creation and become part of the work of God that is bigger than themselves. The greatest treasure and measure for a life well lived is in the pursuit of what God loves and invests the Godself in. All other pursuits unless they are done within the context of the pursuit of the missio Dei are temporal and passing.	Is the missio Dei the passion and center of the church? If the Father sent the total object of his devotion (the only begotten Son) and his Spirit, so that we might have life and communion with the Godhead; how does that change my life and my desires? What does that mean for a community of disciples?

Desired Results – Vocation and Calling – Movement Outward – Lesson Goal 10





What resulting action would you like for the student?	What are the critical essential questions you would like the student to ask?
Upon graduating the student will have a kingdom vision of vocation and gifting that is shaped and impassioned by the missio Dei.	I hope the student will engage in “social visioning” with his/her cohort that asks the question of how their particular vocation will become a kingdom vocation. Is vocation for the benefit of the individual or gifted stewardship to be exercised in the contest of the kingdom community?
 	 
What will the student understand as a result of this class?	What critical and session questions will focus this unit?
Passion for life, vocation, and gifting are tools God provides for the flourishing of humans and nature in the context of the kingdom of God.	What do I imagine that my particular vocation contributes to God’s kingdom? How does this imagining move beyond the concept of ethics in vocation to address the purpose of my vocation? How do we maintain a healthy perspective on the necessity to have a wage or profit and yet balance that with the vocation’s contribution to human flourishing? What does it mean to be “my brothers (or neighbors) keeper?”



Desired Results – Becoming Priests and Kings – Movement Outward – Lesson Goal 11

What resulting action would you like for the student?	What are the critical essential questions you would like the student to ask?
<p>Upon graduating the student has developed a God infused passion for people and creation.</p> <p>The student experiences a relationship with God that brings into focus his/her role as priest and king/stewardship.</p>	<p>What is the nature of God's love for humanity?</p> <p>How does God show this love for men and women?</p> <p>How do we emulate the love of God for our neighbors?</p> <p>What does neighbor mean?</p> <p>What does stewardship mean in terms of taking responsibility for our neighbor/brother?</p>
 	 
What will the student understand as a result of this class?	What critical and session questions will focus this unit?
<p>The passion and mission of God in the world becomes the passion and mission of his people (the disciples of Jesus) for the world.</p> <p>The nature of Jesus becomes the nature of his body.</p> <p>The spiritual practices of Jesus become the practices of his disciples.</p> <p>Prayer, seeking God's will, obedience, love for the Father, our brothers and sisters, our neighbor, and the world.</p>	<p>What is the difference between the notion of "the axiom of God's apathy" and "the axiom of God's passion?" How did the view of God's apathy develop and why do we need to exchange it for God's passion?</p> <p>What does priesthood and stewardship mean?</p>

Desired Results –Becoming Stewards – Movement Outward – Lesson Goal 12

What resulting action would you like for the student?	What are the critical essential questions you would like the student to ask?
Upon graduating, the student understands her/his responsibility toward creation as priest and steward.	How am I to understand my relationship with the rest of creation beyond the human? What does stewardship mean in relation to God's creation? What does priesthood mean in relation to God's creation?
 	 
What will the student understand as a result of this class?	What critical and session questions will focus this unit?
Just as disciples of Jesus utilize their talents and gifting for human flourishing; disciples are advocates and protectors who accept the goal of flourishing of all of creation.	How do we balance human needs and wants with our God mandated stewardship with nature? Is there a justice issue as far as the rights of other species to co-inhabit the earth?

## APPENDIX B – DETERMINING ACCEPTABLE EVIDENCE

Determining Acceptable Evidence –Upward Movement	
<p>What evidence will show that the student understand...</p> <p>Performance Task, Projects</p>	
<p>A study of scripture using inductive Bible study augmented by readings in Relational Theology – Selections from Moltmann, Zizioulas, and others emphasizing the relational nature of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.</p> <p>Interactive online blog where students will write and respond to the teachers and each other.</p> <p>The student will write a weekly reflection Journal and participate in group discussions centering on the nature of God and creation.</p>	
<p>Quizzes, Tasks, Academic Prompts</p>	
<p>Sectional exam – written short essay questions showing understanding of the material.</p>	
Other Evidence (e.g. observations, work samples, dialogues)	Student Self - Assessment
<p>Student led spiritual retreat at the end of this unit that focuses on Trinitarian worship and spiritual disciplines.</p>	<p>Reflection essay as to the student's spiritual journey, describing their understanding and relationship with God and how this section has informed and changed their perception, relationship, and worship with God.</p>

## Determine Acceptable Evidence –Inward Movement

What evidence will show that the student understand...

Performance Task, Projects

Readings in Relational Theology – Selections from Moltmann, Zizioulas, and others plus a study of scripture emphasizing the relational communion with God, Jesus and Spirit.

Reflection journal and group discussion centering on the nature of community in light of the Trinitarian communion.

Reflection and group discussion on past and current spiritual formation and the building of significant relationships (in family and in the college years – curricular and extra-curricular activities).

Reflection and group discussion centering on the church as a mode of being and theological anthropology.

Quizzes, Tasks, Academic Prompts

Sectional exam – written short essay questions showing understanding of the material.

Individual and group work addressing the past (family of origin – Genogram)

Other Evidence (e.g. observations, work samples, dialogues)

Student Self - Assessment

The student will produce a reflection essay (autobiography) as to the student's spiritual journey describing their past understanding and relationship with family and community. She/he will reflect on how this section has/has not informed and changed her/his perception and relationship with God. Each student will be asked to incorporate their imagination as to how they would like to build future relationships.

## Determine Acceptable Evidence –Outward Movement

What evidence will show that student understand...

Performance Task, Projects

Readings in Relational Theology – Selections from Moltmann, Zizioulas, and others plus a study of scripture emphasizing the missio Dei and the work and witness of the Church. Assignment of the book The Mission of God's People by Christopher Wright. Reflection Journal and group discussion centering on the nature of the missio Dei. Reflection and group discussion on past models and understandings concerning the witness and mission of the church. Reflection and group discussion centering on the missio Dei as the church is infused with God's passion for the flourishing of Creation. (Outward – The passionate participation church in the missio Dei as central to its calling) Reflection and group discussion centering on the church as a mode of being and theological anthropology.

Quizzes, Tasks, Academic Prompts

Sectional exam – written short essays questions showing understanding of the material.  
Participation with an assigned Christian vocational mentor in some activity related to vocation specific ministry.

Other Evidence (e.g. observations, work samples, dialogues)

Student Self - Assessment

The student will write a reflection essay as to the student's journey describing their past understanding of relationship with neighbors, community, and creation.  
They will be asked to include a reflection on and how this section has/has not informed and changed the student's perception of themselves and their relationship with the world.  
They will be asked to imagine what future relationships with "other" might look like.

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